

THE SEQUEL TO "SHE,"

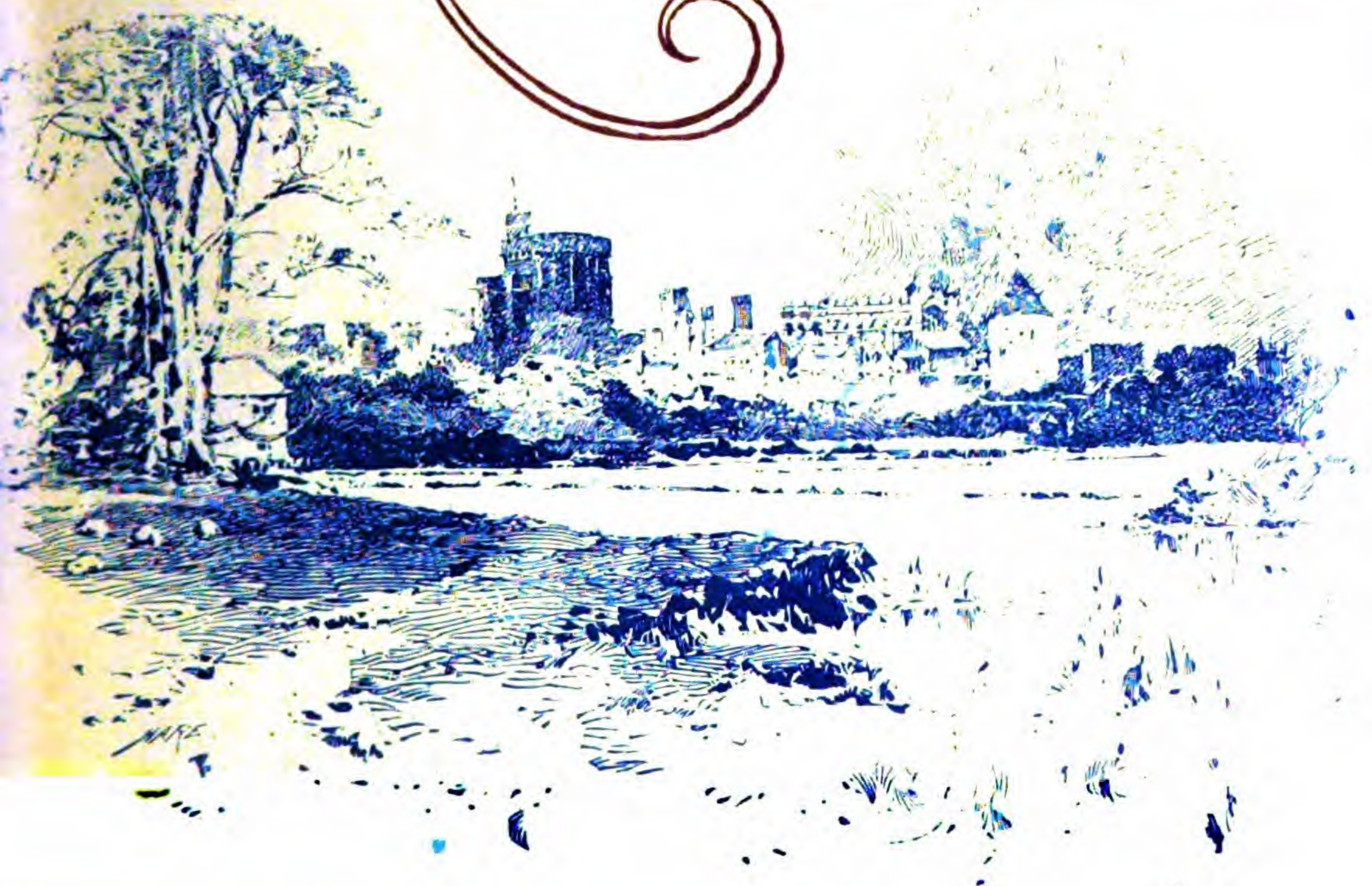
By H. RIDER HAGGARD.

THE

EGERTON CASTLE'S

"IF YOUTH BUT KNEW."

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THE TRANSFER OF TOMPKINS'S GHOST

By ALBERT LEE.*

I KNEW Tompkins well. That's why I believe this story. When I say I believe this story, I don't mean that I'm prepared to accept it as McCurdy tells it; for McCurdy has been on the road many long years, and he doesn't hesitate to make the Recording Angel work overtime. But I will stand by the facts, for these can be proved, and I'll let McCurdy be responsible for the trimmings. After all, it would seem that he exaggerates less on this yarn than on any he ever tells—and I've heard him tell many, and this one many times. Probably even he can see that this requires no embellishments. The cigarette incident may be true—for Tompkins was an inveterate cigarette smoker,—but I want to go on record right here as doubting it. I want to go on record as doubting it because I put perfect faith in all the rest; and I believe the rest—not because I can bring myself to believe anything McCurdy may say, but because I knew Tompkins, and I don't think Tompkins would lie, even after death.

Tompkins was a very promising young man. He and I started out from New York about the same time. His line was jewellery, and his territory was the middle west; I was trying to sell shirts and neckties to the same crowd, but they had not been educated up to cheviots and madrasses in those days, and after a year of it I switched to patent medicines, and now I don't have to work. Tompkins had good luck from the start, and he might have been following the Cup defender on a steam-yacht to-day if it had not been for poker; but his good-luck there ruined him. Too much good luck is worse than none, because it amounts to about the same thing at the turn. Tompkins's turn was a sharp turn, and it was not to the right nor to the left, but straight down. I was with him just before it, and I got back to St. Jo. just in time for the funeral.

Tompkins used to do the cities and the big towns. I did, too; but I made buggy trips among the farmers, besides, so I used to lose track of Tompkins for weeks at a time.

When I found him again, he always had some big poker story to tell, and he never would listen to my warnings about what would happen if they got a line on him at headquarters. A man who sells jewels and carries a few thousands in samples around with him ought not to play poker. But Tompkins was a born gambler; and the more he played, the better he sold. That's a fact.

But one night, in St. Jo., a slick gentleman named Isaac Blumenstein, fresh from Denver, got into the game. McCurdy insists on calling him *Blumensteen*. "Ikey" is good enough for me; it's easier, too. But Ikey was not easy. He was the hardest proposition that ever struck the crowd, and in three nights he had made Tompkins look like thirty cents. As I said before, I was showing neckties to the farmers about that time, or McCurdy might never have had this story to tell. But McCurdy was in the game on the last night, and he says Tompkins, who had been dropping coin steadily for three nights, came in with a wad like a bolster. Ikey was there, too, and in four hours' play Ikey had the wad. That's the last they ever saw of Ikey, and, what's worse, it's the last they ever saw of Tompkins.

He left suddenly the next day and went down to Castleton, about an hour out from St. Jo. He used to call there every other trip. He went to the Porter House, as usual, and they gave him a big room in the wing on the second floor. The windows look out on an orchard that belongs to the big man of the town—I forget his name now. At any rate, the room was in the back of the house, and Tompkins could have practised on a cornet without waking the policeman out in front on the main street. I only mention this fact to show how easy it was for a burglar to get into Tompkins's room without being heard or seen, even in a town as big as Castleton. And that's just what happened. They found poor Tompkins lying across the bed with a broken head the next morning, and only a couple of hundred dollars'-worth of scarf-pins and sleeve-buttons left in the bottom of his sample-case. The window was open, a chair was upset, and they found a hat that did not belong to

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Tompkins. Of course, the papers were full of it. I got the story the next day in Cobville. McCurdy had heard of it at once and was in Castleton that afternoon. There was



"McCurdy doesn't hesitate to make the Recording Angel work overtime."

a lot of red tape with the coroner and the police, but finally McCurdy brought the body up to St. Jo. and we buried poor Tompkins there.

Now, up to this point of the story I'll answer for the details myself. From now on, for a short space, we've got to take

McCurdy's word for it. I would scarcely believe McCurdy under oath, but I believe this story—all except that part about the cigarettes—and I believe it because I can't see how McCurdy could have found out what he knew unless things happened as he says they happened. I don't believe in ghosts, either; but I make an exception in this case, because I can't dodge it.

McCurdy was in Castleton about four months after Tompkins's death. McCurdy's line was soap, and he is known all through that country as the worst—but that's different. McCurdy went to the Porter House, of course. We all used to go there. It was early fall, it was night, and the rain was coming down—well, they can manufacture about as nasty a line of weather in a small Missouri town as in any place I know. The hotel was jammed. They weren't going to take McCurdy. But it was a new clerk who tried to switch McCurdy to the other hotel, and he never would have tried it if he had known the wealth of McCurdy's vocabulary. Finally, they offered him a cot in the hall, but just then the night clerk came on, and he knew McCurdy, and he said they'd give him the haunted room. McCurdy gave them no laugh; but when they told him it was the room where poor Tompkins had been killed, he leaned over the counter and asked questions.

They told him that about a month after the murder, a man who had been assigned to that room came howling down the stairs at three o'clock in the morning and said he had seen a ghost. They could not get him to go back; but the clerk put it all down to the grape. A week later, there was the same performance all over again, with another man who had never heard of Tompkins or Tompkins's ghost. Then the Porter House people began to take it seriously, and they waited for a good customer to try that room on. The right thing came along in the person of a Baptist minister. They put him in the haunted room, and they all sat up that night in the bar awaiting developments—the clerk, the bar-keep, old man Porter himself, and the cop. But the parson was game, I guess, because he never squealed. He came down at six o'clock the next morning, though looking pretty yellow, and paid his bill and went to the depôt lunch counter for breakfast. Nobody had the nerve to ask him any questions; but since then the Porter people had not put anyone in that room until the night McCurdy came along and used bad

language and said he had known Tompkins, and did not believe in ghosts, and was ready to pulverise the man that tried any masquerading on him during the night. So they gave him the key and a pitcher of ice-water, and McCurdy went upstairs to bed.

It was a good-sized room, with two windows facing the orchard in the rear of the house. There was a double bed, a bureau, a wash-stand, a table in the middle of the floor, a great easy-chair, and a few cane-bottom chairs scattered around to fill up space. McCurdy locked the door and put one of the chairs against it, because he had his suspicions about a joke. Then he looked out of the window into the orchard, where the trees were rocking and sputtering in the storm, and reflected that it would be a mighty enthusiastic ghost who would try to come in by that route that night. He put the water-pitcher on a chair near the head of the bed, and determined to baptise any joker who disturbed him in the night. Then he turned in.

He says he went to sleep right away, but awoke after a while with a queer sort of sensation, as if somebody was in the room. The storm had blown over by this time, and the moon was shining dimly through the half-drawn curtains, giving just light enough to distinguish the objects in the room. McCurdy turned over, and although he felt he was only about half awake, he plainly distinguished the form of a man sitting in the armchair. He admits he was startled at first; then he began to get angry, and he reached cautiously out towards the water-pitcher, intending to make a jump for the fellow in the chair. But he stopped half-way and raised himself on his elbow, because the thing in the chair was the weirdest thing he'd ever seen. It looked like a figure in a fog, and, what's more, it looked like Tompkins. McCurdy stared and stared, and then he coughed and sat up straight in bed, just to be sure he was awake. The figure in the chair turned and said—

"Ah! you are awake at last. I have been waiting for you."

McCurdy gasped. No human voice ever sounded like that. It was like Tompkins speaking in another room; but the words were audible and distinct. McCurdy felt the cold chills going up and down his spine. He tried to say something, but he could not. Then the ghost spoke again.

"What time is it?" he asked.

McCurdy pulled his watch out from under the pillow and managed to answer—

"Almost two o'clock."

"You've kept me waiting just two hours," said the thing in the chair.

"Sorry," ventured McCurdy, for he did not have any words to waste.

"It's of no consequence," continued the ghost quietly. "I'm used to waiting. I have plenty of time. In fact, I have nothing else to do. If I had waked you up, you would probably have cut and run like the other fellows. You aren't going to run, are you?"

McCurdy could not have walked.

"I guess not," he said.

"Because I want to ask you a question," resumed the ghost, "and it is of the utmost importance to me that it should be answered. The first two fellows would not even wait for me to ask it, and the minister just pulled the clothes over his head and prayed."

"I'll wait," said McCurdy.

The ghost got up out of the armchair and moved across the room. As he passed in front of the window, McCurdy could see right through him—and then he was sure it was a ghost. He got a good look at the face, too, and he shouted—

"Billy Tompkins!"

The spectre paused and gazed at McCurdy. McCurdy said—

"I'm McCurdy."

"By Jove!" whispered the ghost, "I'm glad to see you, Mac. I knew some of you fellows would be along pretty soon. Have you got any cigarettes?"

"On the table," replied McCurdy, and then he *knew* it was Tompkins. The ghost found the cigarettes, lighted one, and sat down again in the big chair. He inhaled the smoke, and McCurdy could see it go down his throat into his body and down into his legs. He never blew it out again, so that the more he smoked, the more substantial and opaque he became. When he had finished about three cigarettes, McCurdy could no longer see through him. He was in the presence of a greyish white replica of Tompkins.

"How about that question?" he asked finally.

"Coming," said the ghost. "But you don't mind a little ancient history first, do you?"

McCurdy said he didn't.

"You know as well as I do about that last night in St. Jo., where Ikey got all there was coming to him. You remember the wad I had? You remember, too, that I'd been losing straight for three days?"

McCurdy remembered all these things.

"I banked on my luck," continued the ghost; "and the day of that game, I—I—I—hypothecated practically the entire contents of my sample-case."

"Where?" cried McCurdy.

The ghost of Tompkins told him who his uncle was in St. Jo.

"I got three thousand," added the ghost, "and then Ikey got it. That settled me. I knew it was all up then. I was a thief, and there was no way out. I bought a little white powder that a travelling medico told me about once, and I came down here and swallowed it. I did not write any letters or send any farewells; I just took my medicine and went to bed. I was about getting unconscious—for it was one of these opium things that lets you off easy and takes a long time doing it—when that fellow crawled in at the window and made for the sample-case. I ought to have let him alone, but I did not. I got up, and we clinched, and the poor fool cracked me on the head with something hard. I fell across the bed with a gash in my forehead, and the burglar thought he had done for me. He lost his nerve and skipped without even taking a pin. The next morning I was found dead. Now, did I commit suicide or was I murdered?"

McCurdy has had a good many questions fired at him in his time, but he gives the championship to this one of Tompkins's ghost. He was so staggered by it that he got up out of bed and counted his fingers and toes to see if he was awake. Then he sat down again and just gazed vacantly at the smoky apparition.

The ghost did not seem to mind, because pretty soon he began talking again.

"You see," he said, "it is not very pleasant to be the ghost of a murdered man; for in the first place, you're visible, and that scares people; and in the second place, you have to roam about the spot where the crime was committed, and that gets tiresome. The spiritual remains of a suicide are invisible, and are bound by no such conventions."

"Strange," muttered McCurdy.

"Not at all," answered the ghost. "It is only natural, as you will learn when you become a ghost."

McCurdy shuddered, but he pulled himself together and asked—

"What do you want me to do? Hanged if I know who killed you!"

"But he's been arrested," said the ghost. "He's locked up in the gaol here now. If

you can find some way to prove in court that I killed myself, you'll release me from the Porter House and save the life of that poor devil of a burglar!"

"But don't you know whether you committed suicide or not?" asked McCurdy.

"That does not make any difference," replied the ghost impatiently. "It is not the facts in the case that affect my condition, it's what the living world believes to be the facts. So long as people think I was murdered, I'll have to haunt this room."

Well, to wind up McCurdy's end of the story—the two of them talked there for an hour or more, and the ghost gave McCurdy all the facts, and McCurdy promised to do what he could. Then the ghost said McCurdy had better get some sleep, and he wished him good-night and disappeared through the wall, leaving behind him, McCurdy says, nothing but a strong odour of stale cigarette smoke.

At this point of the story I can take up the thread of it myself, for everybody knows what McCurdy did the next day; and he could not have done it all if he had not seen Tompkins's ghost. Mind you, McCurdy did not know the burglar had been arrested until the ghost told him, and *nobody* knew that Tompkins had pawned his samples the day before he went to Castleton. I was in St. Jo., and I got a telegram from McCurdy telling me to go to a certain joint and find out if Tompkins's stuff was there. I did not understand at first; but I went, and sure enough, there it was. I thought, of course, the thief had owned up, but he had not. The poor fellow, ever since his arrest, had consistently maintained that he had not taken anything from Tompkins's room that night, and the Castleton police had been putting him through the thirty-third degree to make him give up. I telegraphed to McCurdy that I had found the things, and the date they were pawned, which was *two days before the burglary*. But I did not realise that at the time.

McCurdy saw the point, of course, and he was talking Dutch to that burglar's lawyer inside of half an hour. The lawyer wanted to know where McCurdy got his facts, but McCurdy would not tell. He was not going to be laughed at for seeing ghosts. The lawyer, however, said McCurdy had a good tip, and he came on to St. Jo. with him. They picked me up there, and McCurdy told me the story. I was going to drop the whole business then and there, because I thought it was too serious a matter for



"He raised himself on his elbow, because the thing in the chair was the weirdest thing he'd ever seen."

McCurdy to take the occasion to build a castle like that. But he was in dead earnest. He got two doctors and a Board of Health permit; they exhumed the body, and the post-mortem, or post-bury'em, or whatever you call it, showed that Tompkins had taken enough poison to kill a regiment.

When the case came up for trial, a few months later, that country lawyer just spread-eagled all over the court-room. He proved suicide, and the burglar was let off with six

months. The papers were full of it, but McCurdy kept dark, and that little six-by-nine farmer of an attorney got a reputation for astuteness and keen insight and shrewdness that put him at the head of the Missouri bar with a jump. Now he wears shirts with the cuffs sewed on to the sleeves, and spells "fee" with a capital F.

That's all there is to it. This is the only ghost story I ever believed, because it's the only one that can be proved; and I don't



see what better proof is wanted. McCurdy told the Porter House people there was not any ghost in their haunted room, and that

there never would be; and there's never been any trouble there since. Poor Billy got his transfer, I guess.

HORAS: NON: NVMERO: NISI: SERENAS.

A GARDEN which an old red wall encloses,
Where sighing lilies hang their love-
pale heads,
And burgeoned clusters of old-fashioned roses
Bend o'er herbaceous beds;
Here Myosotis, in her maiden manner,
Murmurs "Forget me not!" between her
tears;
And Iris, spreading like a kingly banner,
Streams above sheaves of spears!

White billowy pinks suffuse a balmy fragrance
Spiced with the scent of sandal-wood and
clove,
And honeysuckles, looped in golden vagrance,
Transpire the breath of love.
A close-trimmed box-hedge skirts the jewelled
border,
Within whose bounds a springy lawn expands,
And centrally, as fits the Sun's recorder,
A moss-grown Dial stands.

O! that my life were laid in such a garden!
Where sunshine bathes the world in amber haze;
O! to cast off the carking weary burden,
And bask through summer days!
Thou happy Dial! that canst dream and slumber,
Lulled by the incense of a thousand flowers,
Where never shadow falls, except to number
The tale of shining hours!

HOWEL SCRATTON.

A GAME OF DRAUGHTS.

By FRED M. WHITE.*



LIFFORD STEELE quietly remarked that the game was over, which patent fact his opponent admitted cheerfully, with the rider that there was more in the game of draughts than people imagined. The

two were playing comfortably between their cigarettes in the luxurious lounge of the Brema Castle Hotel. A band was playing somewhere in the distance, there was a *crescendo* of chattering voices, the soft swish of draperies. A tall girl, with a white, sad face, passed along as Steele was packing up the draughtsmen. She paused suddenly.

"Perhaps you would like to play, Miss Denbury?" Steele hazarded. His late antagonist had strolled away. "If so——"

"I loathe the game," Angela said almost passionately. "To my mind, there is something so horridly weird—— Mr. Steele, are you a good player?"

The girl paused, and her manner changed suddenly. The keen-eyed, shrewd young barrister was regarding her intently. Surely mere dislike for an innocent pastime could not have touched her passions so deeply. Angela Denbury was more beautiful than she had been when Steele first met her at Davos Platz some eighteen months before, but then the white sorrow of her face had been the glowing happiness of irresponsible youth. The passing months had made sad history for Angela Denbury lately. She sat down by Steele's side and commenced to fan herself gently.

"Mr. Steele," she said abruptly, "do you remember Raymond Hare?"

Steele nodded. He was beginning to understand. Raymond Hare had been at Davos Platz at that time . . . Certainly a handsome, healthy young fellow, with everything good on his side. There was a flush on Angela's face now.

"If I can help you," Steele suggested, "pray command me."

"Yes, yes. You are very good. When I met you in the corridor yesterday, it occurred to me that you might be disposed . . . Raymond liked you; indeed, you were very friendly at Davos. Do you know that Hare Park, Raymond's place, is not far from here?"

"Then I shall certainly ride over and call," said Steele. "I hope he's well. But that class of athlete is never sick or sorry."

"Indeed, you are quite wrong," Miss Denbury replied. "Raymond is dying. He is dying of a broken heart. And it will be merciful if he is taken away before he loses his mind altogether."

Steele was deeply shocked. Something told him that he was to hear more, but he had too much tact and delicacy to ask questions. With the dreamy murmur of the band and the smiling faces about him, it seemed hard all at once to grapple with the tragedy hanging over two lives.

"It seems almost farcical," Angela went on—"at least, in one way. You were surprised a minute or two ago at an outburst of mine over a simple question about a game of draughts. If that game had never been invented, I should be a happy girl to-day with—with——"

"Raymond Hare," Steele murmured. "Won't you take me into your confidence? Anything that lies in my power to do I will do gladly."

It was some moments before Angela replied. Her dark eyes were fixed upon space.

"Do you believe in warnings and banshees and occult things?" she asked suddenly.

"Not in the least," Steele replied. "I have found the air of the police-courts wonderfully efficacious in solving mysteries of that kind."

"Then you would look with suspicious eyes upon a game of draughts played by invisible hands in an old castle at midnight."

"I should indeed. That is all very well in the pages of Christmas fiction."

"Mr. Steele, I have seen it myself; I have felt the icy draught; I have heard the clash of steel; I have seen the red and white men

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moved. And when the game has been played for the fifty-second consecutive Saturday night, Raymond Hare will die—if he does not go out of his mind first."

The last few words were uttered with the deepest sadness. They were none the less sad because they sounded so strangely out of place there.

"The fulfilment of a legend," Steele murmured. "Please tell me the story. You have no idea how deeply I am interested. Those spectral antagonists are playing for the life of a living man. As a champion performer, I should very much like to be present at one of those contests. Does one invariably win?"

"Oh, no! Sometimes one player, and sometimes the other. If red is successful in the majority of cases, then Raymond's life is spared. Otherwise—oh, Mr. Steele! is it possible that such things can really be?"

The man of the world smiled sceptically. "Those family legends were generally very interesting. He intimated that he would much like to hear this one."

"I can tell you in a few words," said Angela. "The Hares and the Monks have ever been bitter rivals; and when the War of the Roses broke out, the heads of the two houses took different sides. After the disaster of Bosworth Field, Alyward Monk fled home, and Amyas Hare betrayed him. The former surprised the latter at dead of night over a curious draughtsboard in the big hall. Then there was a scene. They were neither of them armed, but there were plenty of rapiers about. Monk swore that he or Hare should die. Then they played each for the life of the other across the draughtsboard, and Alyward Monk won. Amyas Hare handed a rapier to the victor, who stabbed him to the heart under the very eyes of the unhappy man's wife, who had come down to see why her husband had not gone to bed. And ever since then, for a year before the death of the head of the Hare family, that ghostly game is played every Saturday night. No doubt you have heard many similar legends, but I have seen the working of this one for myself. Sometimes the curse misses a generation, but it is working for Raymond Hare now as it worked for his father. The latter knew his end was coming, and it did. Within a week of the end of his year he broke his neck out hunting."

"It might have been a coincidence," Steele suggested.

"Oh, I grant you that!" Angela exclaimed.

"More especially as ever since that dreadful discovery by the distracted wife, the Hares have been a highly strung, emotional, imaginative race. But the thing is going on now, and Raymond will never be able to stand the strain. If he is not driven to suicide, his mind must give way. And we were so happy together; we loved one another so dearly. And now, and now——"

The girl paused, with the tears brimming on her lashes like diamonds. The deep sadness of her face touched Steele to the heart.

"Let me ask you one practical question," he said. "In the event of Raymond Hare's death, who comes into the property?"

Angela Denbury did not quite know. There was an elderly second cousin, a very nice kind of man who lived with Hare, who she imagined was next-of-kin. George Minton had once been marked out as a great geologist, or something of that kind, before he gave up his career for the sake of Hare. Steele nodded carelessly, but he made a note of the same.

"Now tell me something about the phenomena," he asked. "When and under what circumstances did you see it for yourself?"

"Well, of course I have known all about it for years," Angela replied. "Raymond told me how the thing had acted in his father's case. But that was some five years ago, and, after all, it rested on the evidence of servants. Moreover, Raymond's father was a very hard-living man, and in any case could not have survived long. Raymond had never seen those metal draughtsmen move till shortly after we were engaged, and then there was a big house-party at Hare Park. I shall never forget his face the next morning. At my urgent request the secret was kept from everybody but Mr. Minton. At the same time I could not quite bring myself to believe in the phenomena. I decided to see for myself the following Saturday night after the house was quiet."

"A little after midnight I came down into the great flagged hall. It was a warm night and I felt no inconvenience. I reached the place where the queer metal draughtsboard stood with the metal men ranged upon it. I had a queer feeling that somebody was watching me. One or two electric lamps were always left burning in the hall, so that I took courage. Then, with a kind of feeling that it was all so much nonsense, I hid behind a curtain."

"At the end of ten minutes an icy draught



"'I loathe the game,' Angela said almost passionately."

swept along the hall. There were murmurs like the sound of strife, a little pause, then, to my horror, one of the draughtsmen moved! It was only by a great effort that I kept myself from yelling aloud. . . . Well, I watched that clever, weird game played till white won—white, the colour of the House of York, whose cause Alyward Monk had espoused. If the material fingers of two champions had been on the table, it had been no better played. I saw the taken pieces rise in the air and fall on the table with a dull clink, then I heard the thud of a body and the clatter of a rapier, as the victor carelessly tossed it on the floor. If you ask me what happened after that, I frankly say that I don't know. When I came to myself again, I was lying on my bedroom floor, and the stable clock was striking three."

The girl paused with a long-drawn sigh; her dark eyes were full of pain. She half glanced at her companion to see if he were smiling at her. But there was no smile on Steele's keen, clean-shaven face.

"Can you find it possible to believe my story?" Angela asked.

"Every word of it," Steele said promptly. "I feel sure that your eyes did not deceive you. Also I feel pretty sure that there is some explanation. And now I am going to help you if I possibly can. In the first place, you are not to let anybody know what you have told me—not even Raymond Hare. He must be led to understand that the family secret is intact. In the next place you must contrive for me to become a guest at Hare Park for a few days. Does Hare come here at all—to see you, I mean?"

"Two or three times a week; indeed, I am in this hotel so as to be near him. He has insisted upon our engagement being broken off; but so long as there is life, there is hope, and I shall never give Raymond up, never!"

"Indeed, I hope there will be no reason," Steele said warmly. "Write and ask Hare to come and see you to-morrow. Say I am leaving for Scotland in the morning, and my room is already engaged. Under pretence that I cannot stay here, I am going to ask Mr. Hare to put me up for a day or two."

"He will be delighted. The face of an old friend distracts him from——"

"Then that is settled," Steele said cheerfully. "I'm going to my own room now, where I can think the matter out over a quiet cigarette. Also I shall have to write one or two important letters. Good night."

He pressed the girl's hand warmly, leaving

her with a glow and a feeling of happiness to which she had long been a stranger. He sat down beside his own window till the noise and clatter of the hotel had ceased; he looked out into the darkness with a cigarette glowing between his teeth. Gradually something like a theory began to shape itself in his mind. Then Steele switched on the light and wrote a couple of letters, which he decided to post personally. One was addressed to a well-known firm of private detectives. There was nothing in it besides a single person's name, written across the middle of the page, with a query after it. Steele smiled grimly as he fastened down the flap and sealed it; after which he dismissed the subject from his mind and went to bed.

II.

WITH a post-prandial cigarette well alight, Steele was thoughtfully regarding his host. There was another man present—a slight, tall man, with a pleasant face and open smile, who had been introduced to Steele as Minton. Raymond Hare himself was making pictures on the tablecloth with his breadcrumbs. He was deadly pale, fitfully silent, and feverishly gay. His dark eyes expanded strangely, the lids twitched in a quick, nervous way. Steele knew two men who had been all through the siege of Kimberley, and he recognised the same symptoms—nerves of the worst type.

"You ought to be a happy man here," he said. "I never saw a more perfect specimen of a Tudor house. A man who possesses seven Romneys could not possibly be miserable. What do you think, Mr. Minton?"

Minton smiled in his pleasant manner. Hare started. He seemed on the verge of an outburst, but checked himself.

"I am never quite happy on a Saturday night," he said, as if speaking more to himself than anything else. "What nonsense I am saying!"

Steele's air of polite bewilderment was perfect, Minton's expression was one of annoyance. On the far side of the electric flower-stand Steele could study the features of the other two. Electric lights in old copper fittings were everywhere. The night was a little chilly, so that an electric radiator gleamed in the deep, old-fashioned fireplace. Raymond Hare rose from his seat, muttering that he had forgotten something. His face was ghastly pale, and there were heavy drops on his forehead, though Steele affected to see nothing of this.

"My nephew is not quite himself lately," Mr. Minton said.

"Not enough to do," Steele laughed. "It is a favourite axiom of mine that the man who has everything is never really happy. Now, the change from a hotel to a house like this is a great treat to me. How wonderfully well the electric lights blend with these old walls! Do you run your stoves on the same set of wires?"

Minton explained that there was practically a second set for the stoves. If the ordinary lights went wrong, then they had always the stoves to fall back upon. The scheme was his own, though he did not profess to know anything of the technical part of the business.

"You have not studied electricity, then?" Steele asked carelessly.

"I am ashamed to say that I know nothing whatever about it," Minton laughed. "Take a cigar, and come and play a game of billiards. I dare say Raymond will be down again presently."

On the whole, it was an exceedingly dull evening, and more than once Steele wished himself at the hotel again. Hare was distraught and uneasy, and Minton appeared to be keeping an anxious watch over him. Steele put up his cue after the third game and refused to play any more.

"I am afraid that we are neither of us up to championship form," he said. "As it is just eleven o'clock, I dare not play, lest the game should carry us into Sunday, which is one of the drawbacks of Saturday night."

"To-night is Saturday," Hare said suddenly. "Ugh! somebody is walking over my grave. I hope I shall be better to-morrow."

Steele murmured something appropriate. Personally he would have liked to have suggested sending for the doctor, and the advisability of having somebody to look after his host, but that was out of the question. Outside the walls of an asylum, he had never seen anything like the face his friend turned to him just for the moment. No mind could stand a strain like that for long.

The house grew quiet presently; there was a faint light or two in the hall and corridors. For the best part of an hour Steele sat in his room smoking. A few minutes before midnight he put down his cigarette and crept out into the corridor. It looked very dim and lonely, despite the specks of light here and there. The black walls, with their strong portraits, the ghostly figures in armour, all appealed to a strong

imagination. Well in land, as he usually held himself, Steele was conscious of an extra heartbeat or so as he crept downstairs. He stood presently on the polished oak floor close by where stood the fatal draughtsboard, with the men neatly arranged thereon.

Steele proceeded to examine the curiosity carefully. The board stood on a slim iron leg fantastically decorated with beaten copper. The foot was ornate with the same rich scroll-work; the top was a perfect specimen of the ironworker's art. The foot was bolted into the floor, as it was liable to topple over. The twenty-four draughtsmen were made of some kind of metal; the tops were enamelled in red and white. Altogether it was the kind of graceful work of art that one might see at Christie's, and which might fetch anything up to a thousand pounds. As Steele stood there, the clock struck midnight.

Almost instantly the corridor was filled with an icy current of air. Steele looked round, expecting to find an open window somewhere; but there was no sign of that, and the cold air continued. There was a faint moaning sound that came from somewhere overhead, a weird sound calculated to fray a set of nerves not too highly tempered. Steele was feeling the influence of it.

He stepped back for a moment, and as he did so, one of the red draughtsmen moved a square. Steele could distinctly hear the slide of metal on metal. A curious sensation shot up his spine, there was a queer tingling at the roots of his hair. Just for a moment he had a wild impulse to rush back to his room and lock himself in there.

"I'm not surprised at Hare," he muttered. "Seen unexpectedly, it would try the nerves of the strongest man."

The phantom game continued. Steele crushed down the fear that held him. He was watching with a vivid curiosity that almost amounted to pain. Not only was a ghostly contest in progress, but it was a masterly one. A man would be pushed forward and taken, it would rise with a little quick motion in the air, and fall with a dull click on the side of the table. Steele watched the whole thing with eyes that fairly started from his head. He saw the skill of attack and parry, and saw that gradually the unseen white foeman was getting the best of the contest. At the end of a quarter of an hour the game was won. White had two men left. It was a strange feature of the game that neither antagonist ever made the smallest effort to get a king. The contest

was a cutting down one from start to finish. Perhaps the king at draughts was an innovation since the early Tudor days. The game was over. Almost immediately upon its termination came a dull sound like the falling of a body, then the rattle of steel, as if somebody had carelessly tossed a rapier on the oak floor.

The sound brought Steele out of his waking dream. He felt that he had had quite enough of it for one night. There was bound to be some explanation for this uncanny performance; but all the same, Steele felt that he could work it out better in the light of his bedroom. As he turned, he ran into something soft and yielding. It was Raymond Hare, standing petrified and absolutely unconscious of the fact that he was not alone.

"White won!" he whispered hoarsely. "White again! That is three Saturdays in succession—nearly two to one against me. God be good to me!"

He was swaying from head to foot in terror. As he suddenly realised Steele's presence, he opened his lips for a cry of despair. Steele's hand was over his mouth instantly.

"Not a sound," he commanded sternly. "Come up to my room with me, and I'll give you some brandy from my flask."

The strong mind bore down the weaker one. With a shaking hand, Hare began to place the draughtsmen in order again. He whispered something about the servants, and that they must have no opportunity to gossip. Perhaps he was not so far gone, after all, Steele thought. He was bound to admit to himself that he should not have cared for the task.

With a feeling of pleased satisfaction he found himself in his room again. A spoonful of brandy brought a little colour into Hare's cheeks.

"How long has this been going on?" Steele asked.

"Getting on for a year," Hare replied. "I suppose you found out. Well, I am not sorry, Steele; if I don't tell somebody, I shall go mad. Sometimes white wins and sometimes red wins, but always the balance against me. And when this year is up, I shall die, as my father did before me."

"I hope not, old fellow. Was your father's case authenticated?"

"I suppose so," Hare said hopelessly. "Not long before he died, an old servant said she came down one morning and found the draughtsmen lying on the side of the

table, as if somebody had been playing a game."

"That's a coincidence, of course. At the same time, a careless servant may have swept them off by accident in passing. Personally, I refuse to believe that there is anything occult about this business at all. Let's talk about something else. I was saying to your uncle how well those electric fittings go with the old house. Have you had them for very long?"

"The light was first used on December 19 of last year," said Hare.

"Well, there's nothing the matter with your memory, anyway," Steele smiled—"if a man can recollect things like that."

"But, my dear fellow, I have the best possible reasons for remembering," Hare broke in. "It was on the third day after that that the ghosts came back again to play their hideous game for my life."

"In that case you would recollect," Steele said thoughtfully. "Did you see the game for yourself, or did one of the servants?"

"The servants know nothing of the present trouble. My uncle saw it first. He was so fearfully upset and agitated that I guessed what had happened, and taxed him with it. As a man of honour he was bound to tell the truth. And for many a weary Saturday since then have I watched the game. God only knows why I am sane to tell the story now."

There was a deep pity in Steele's heart, a pity steeped in a more violent emotion. He was beginning to see his way. Meanwhile he wanted to be alone to think. Most part of the next day he wrote letters. Two long telegrams he despatched, and waited for the reply personally. Later on in the evening he called at the post-office for letters, receiving one small parcel that looked like a bottle of some kind. It was a tiny phial of white liquid that he slipped into the pocket of his dress waistcoat as he sat down to dinner. If there were anything in his theory, Steele was determined to put it to the test before long; and if he were right, he promised himself a pretty piece of comedy before the week had elapsed.

It was a quiet evening and a quiet dinner, like the others. Steele, pleading that he had letters to write, retired early, as did the others. But the letter-writer must have been quick over his work, for a little later, in his shirt-sleeves, he marched boldly out into the corridor and thence into the hall. In his hand he carried a hammer, a pair of pliers, and a screwdriver. He let the hammer fall with

a loud clang in the corridor. Not a sound followed. Then he made his way down into the hall and proceeded to turn on an extra light or two.

One o'clock was striking as Steele returned

III.

THE great clock over the stables boomed the midnight hour. Before the second stroke had sounded, Steele was out of the room and

into the corridor. There was no disguise about his movements now. He reached the door leading to Mr. Minton's room and rapped sharply. He waited for no reply, but entered without ceremony.

The lights were up, and as yet Minton was fully dressed. There was just the shade of annoyance on the elder man's face. He was coldly demanding to know the meaning of Steele's intrusion when the latter cut him short.

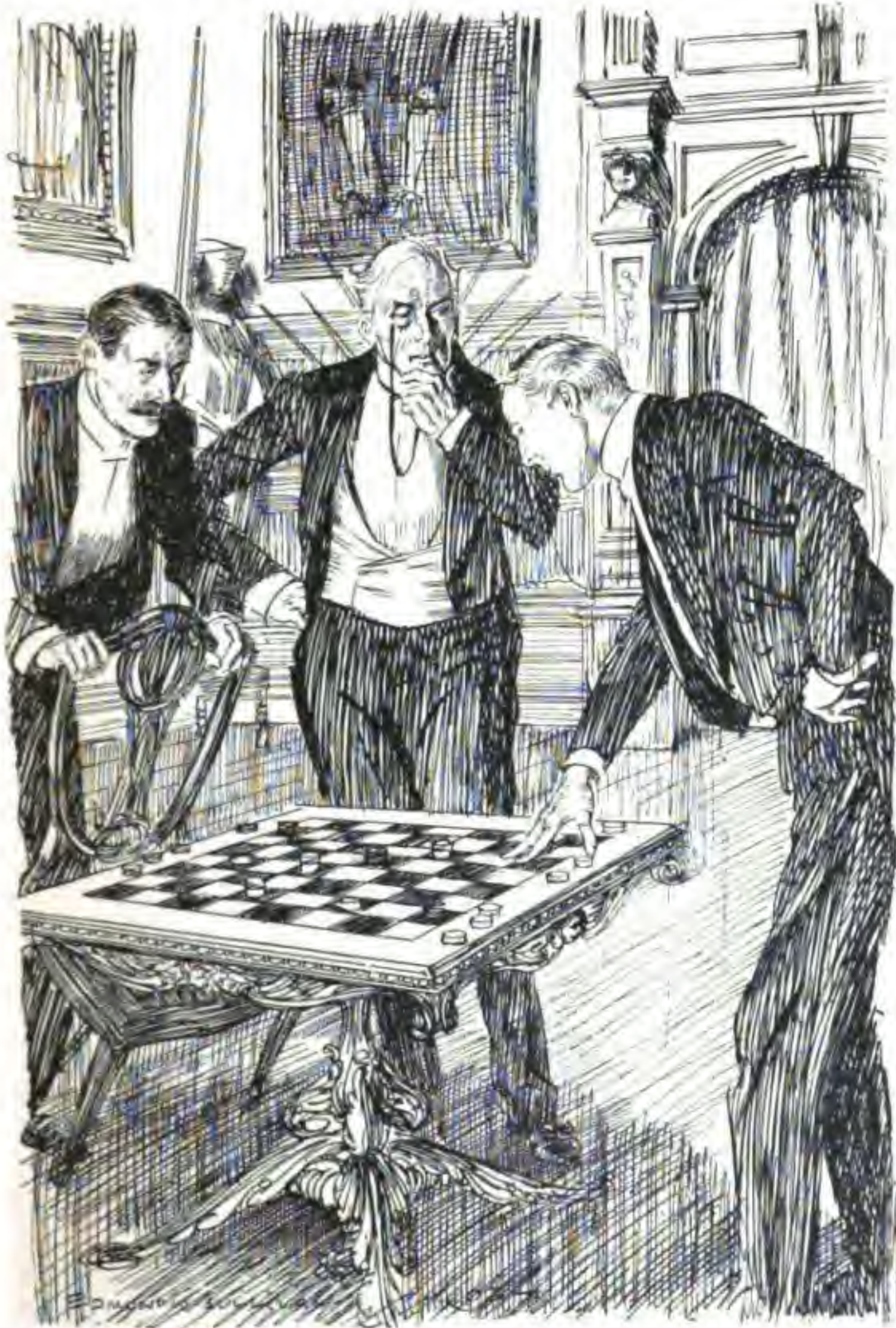
"It is a very pressing matter," he said. "I want you to be good enough to come with me without delay. I have made a discovery."

"Ah! so you have found out the secret of the house! Did you ever hear of anything so distressing, so—so—you know what I mean?"

"I know what you mean perfectly well," said Steele drily. "And I can quite understand why this thing is never mentioned to a stranger. Mean-

while, it seems to me I have found a way to save your unhappy nephew. Will you come this way?"

Minton nodded. He seemed to be swallowing something hard. Steele's request sounded more like a command. Down below in the



"Once more he placed the men, and once more they started of their own volition."

to his room again. There was a smile in his eyes, but his lips were grimly set. On the whole, he had the air of a man who is satisfied with himself.

"If I were a novelist," he said, "I would make a rattling good thing out of this."

hall, Raymond Hare was standing watching that infernal game of draughts in dazed, sick fascination. No murderer waiting for the verdict could have had a more agonised look in his eyes. He was absolutely unconscious of the other two, he had no gaze for anything but the ghastly shifting pieces. The game went on; red made his last fatal move; it was obvious to the meanest understanding that the contest was finished, though a piece or two stood on the table. Then came the sound of the falling body, the clash of steel on wood.

Steele touched Raymond Hare on the shoulder. He looked up with a start. Minton would have hurried him away, but Steele interfered.

"I am not quite satisfied," he said quietly. "Personally, I have yet to be convinced that there is no material reason in this thing. I am going to put the men on the board again, and when I have done so——"

"For Heaven's sake," Minton said hoarsely, "be careful! This is no time——"

"I know it; but I am not in the least afraid. I set the men out so; I am going to challenge the spirit of the House of York to a little game. Now, sir, if you are quite ready."

Steele bowed mockingly. He just reached forward and touched the board, and a white piece moved of its own volition. Immediately a red man jumped from one square to another. Steele turned with a smile to his deeply interested audience. A queer, shaky cry came from Hare's lips.

"It is a new game," he said—"the moves are different. Heaven knows I should be able to tell, seeing that they are burnt into the very matter of my brain!" He was trembling from head to foot with a sudden, sickening hopefulness. The moves of the new game were terribly one-sided. Almost before it had commenced, white's men were slaughtered right and left, and the conflict over.

"We have brought the science up to date," Steele said flippantly. "The shade of your departed ancestor has evidently been attending a tournament or two. A *coup* or two like that will always give him the best of his old antagonist. Really, my dear Hare, you need have no further anxiety in future. Stay quietly tucked up in your bed Saturday nights, and at the end of the year white will find himself in a hopeless minority as regards wins. Again!"

Once more he placed the men, and once more they started of their own volition. This time the moves were slightly different from the last, but after half-a-dozen squares were covered white was once more in diffi-

culties. The weird element seemed to have dropped out of the situation almost. The white, drawn agony had left Hare's face; he was looking on with the air of a man who sees something new and strange in the way of machinery for the first time.

"Come away," Minton said hoarsely. "There is something almost blasphemous in this. And in any case, this flippancy——"

He moved over towards the wall, and immediately the place was in darkness. The electric lights had suddenly failed. Hare cried in affright, his nerves all frayed out at once, and fearful of some ghostly visitation. But Steele took one step near to the draughts-board and waited. Presently he felt a hand just creeping past his own fingers. He fastened on it at once. He uttered no sound, he only held on with a vicelike grip. It was useless for his unseen antagonist to struggle.

"Switch on the stove in the fireplace," he said. "I'm told that's on a separate current, and it will give us plenty of light. Aha! I thought so."

A dull red glow from the big radiator filled the hall and disclosed the figure of Minton on the other side of the board. His wrist was firmly grasped by Steele, his pleasant face was pallid, dark, and scowling.

"He's pulled away the 'cut out' fuse," said Steele coolly. "Mr. Minton, kindly give me a fragment of copper wire, so that I can restore the circuit again. I know you usually carry some in your pocket. Your uncle is a clever man, Hare; he is quite a specialist in electrical matters."

Minton muttered something. All the same, he produced what Steele required. It was only a moment's work to restore the circuit again, almost as easy as a child knots two pieces of string. Hare looked from one face opposite to the other. A light was dawning upon him.

"I have been fooled," he said. "Some infernal jugglery——"

"To the top of your bent," Steele replied. "So far as Mr. Minton is concerned, the thing is finished. So much for a family carefully nurtured on old superstitions. Your ancestors before you have told that story till they came to believe it. Your father's death looked like a case in point. And that gave the wicked uncle yonder his cue. I did not really suspect him till he assured me he knew nothing whatever about electrical matters. When I ascertained that it had been a study with him, I began to put two and two together. See here."

Steele took a strong screwdriver from his

pocket and proceeded to release the quaint old draughtsboard from its fastenings. Under the floor there were a score or more of fine electric wires running up the hollow stem of the table.

"The top of the table is hollow," Steele explained. "Hence the little arrangement was rendered all the easier. If you will examine the top of that board with a strong glass, you will find a tiny copper disc has been let into each of them. This once being done, the rest is easy. You only wanted a certain combination of moves to be arranged, and the electric agency does the rest. There is a little time-clock attached, so that the apparatus could be made to work at a given hour, and there you are. Night after night you have stood watching the thing with fascinated horror, whilst all the time it has been merely mechanical. And yet I was quite able to understand your feelings."

"What were your own the first time you saw it?" Hare asked hoarsely.

Steele freely admitted that the thing had touched his nerves.

"The icy draught was easy," he continued. "It was easy to open a skylight window in which was placed an electric fan. One of those things will soak that air all through the house in less than thirty seconds. As to the clash of steel, a flat piece of metal under the floor attached to one of these wires would do that. The whole thing has been most ingeniously arranged and carried out. You had an utterly unscrupulous rascal to deal with, and everything fitted most beautifully into his hands. If I were in your place, I should not prosecute; I should merely kick him out of the house in the morning. And if ever a scoundrel deserved to be hanged——"

Hare turned round passionately. But already Minton had discreetly disappeared. The sullen bang of his door could be heard, and the quick, grinding rasp of the key in the lock.

"Exit Minton," said Steele grimly. "If you are not too tired——"

"Tired!" Hare cried. "Tired! I feel as if I should never want to sleep again. If you could but faintly imagine what a load has been removed from my heart, if you could only understand the rush and joy of life, and know that the curse——"

"The curse never existed at all," said Steele. "But come to my room, and over a cigarette I'll tell you everything, from the moment that Miss Denbury confided in me and I promised my assistance."

Hare followed eagerly enough. He lay

back, puffing his cigarette with exquisite enjoyment. Already there was a healthier tinge on his sallow cheek.

"First of all, I had to suspect somebody," said Steele. "I gave your uncle first choice; as a matter of fact, there was nobody else. I took the trouble to inquire into his antecedents. They were very bad; he was deeply in debt, and trading upon what might happen if you died. If you died, he came into everything. If you lost your reason, he would only be a little worse off than a wholesale inheritance. Then I found that your relative was an electrical expert. Also I found that the vision of the draughts-players had never been actually seen till the introduction of the electric light into the house.

"After this my case was pretty clear. I read up the subject, I drugged your dear uncle's whisky-and-soda one night, and then set to work. I took that said draughts-board to pieces, and before daylight had not only mastered all its secrets, but reset the mechanical part to a problem of my own. I was going to have a certain amount of fun at your uncle's expense, but he got frightened, and so I had to act on the spur of the moment. Did you see his face when he saw the new combination move under a touch of my hand? No? I dare say you had no room for any thought but your own."

"He wanted to drive me mad!" Hare whispered.

"I fancy he wanted to drive you to suicide," Steele replied. "And when I saw you the first time I came here, he was not far off the accomplishment of his design."

A bright wave of colour came into Hare's cheeks. He seemed to have some little difficulty in getting out his words.

"Very nearly," he said in a low voice. "But for the fact that there is a girl who loves me and who would have so keenly felt the disgrace and sorrow of it, more than once I was on the verge—but why speak of that now? Steele, how can I possibly thank you? How can I——?"

He broke down utterly; then presently his eyes grew bright and sunny as they had been in the old days at Davos. He rose and came across to Steele with outstretched hands.

"Let this be a secret between us for all time," he said.

"Granted, on one condition," Steele laughed. "It is for me to make conditions."

"Of course; but I fancy I can guess what it is. You want to be——"

"Your best man," Steele said quietly. "It is my right, I fancy."

The Flying Dutchman



By Max Adeler

“**A**S fur the *Flying Dutchman*,” said William Potsherd, the venerable mariner, sitting in the reading-room of the Seamen’s Mission after the prayer-meeting, and striking the table with the palm of his hand, “they needn’t tell me there ain’t none, fur I seen her with me own eyes and sailed on her.

“It was that time I was telling you about, when I was fus’ mate of the steamer *Indian King*, and the cyclone capsized her, and I clutched a boat as I came up, and clumb into her. Then I seen Em’ly Smith, the cap’n’s coloured stewardess, floating about, and I fished her out, and we found ourselves alone on the boiling sea.

“So we run along fur sixteen hours, me and Em’ly Smith. She was as black as night-before-last—blacker; black and fat. But she was cheerful. She belonged to the Sons and Daughters and Brothers and Sisters

of Aaron, of the Tribe of Levi, of Rising Sun, Philadelphia, and she sung them camp-meeting hymns to keep up my sperrits; and it did keep them up. As I set there a-looking at her, I says to myself: ‘If the wust comes to the wust, most likely it’s going to be my luck to have to eat you, Em’ly; fur when the choice is between an able seaman, as a useful member of society, and a plain cook, there ain’t no choice; and I do believe you’d eat tender.’

“But after a while I seen a queer-looking craft coming towards me with all sails set, and I thought she’d run us down; but I ketched at the stay-chains as she reached me, and, tying the painter of the boat to them, I was on deck in a minute, and then I lifted Em’ly Smith out.

“I dunno how to tell you what that craft looked like. A kind o’ dusky red all over her decks and her sails and her bulwarks, and the red a kind o’ soft glow like the head of a match in a dark room. I never seen nothing jus’ like it afore or

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since, excepting it was punk out in the woods; only that ain't red, and this ship was red and sort o' dim, shiny like frum stem to stern. And she flew through the water faster'n any steamer you ever seen.

"Well, sir, I'm no coward, but I own up I was skeered with the look o' the boat; and not a man in sight on deck, not even at the bellum; the sails jus' a-bulging and the vessel a-whipping over the sea, the same 's if she was a bird.

"So then I seen a light or something a-shining through a crack in the cabin aft, and I says to Em'ly Smith—

"Now, Em'ly, you just set there on that bucket till I look around and investigate'; and I made my way boldly to the cabin, and went down and shoved the door open and walked right in, ezzackly 's if I was the skipper himself.

"There was two men a-setting at the table in there, the queerest dressed you ever seen, and they was a-playing some kind o' game with cards that was so black they might 've been made of charcoal fur all the difference I could see.

"Then one o' the men who set a-facing me looks up just as he was going to play a card; and when he seen me, he says—

"Well, you *have* nerve! Where did you come frum? Where's your manners? Don't you know this is private?"

"Then I ups and tells him, and fur a minute he looks at me 's if he'd half a mind to chuck me overboard, and then he says—

"What's your name?"

"William Potsherd, mariner," says I, 'of Tom's River, New Jersey,' and then I explains to him how I happened to drop in on him; but leaving out the particulars about Em'ly Smith.

"Set down, William," says he, after reflecting for a little while. 'I'm Cap'n Schmitt, the skipper o' this yer craft, and this is my fus' leftenant, Vanderwerken.'

"But the fus' leftenant seemed sour about something, fur he jus' looks at me and scowls; and when I took a chair, he went over into the corner by the cupboard and scowled wuss and wuss.

"And so you thought you'd ship with us for the v'yage, did you, William?" says Cap'n Schmitt, with a grim smile on his face—a face all scarred and gashed with wrinkles. Why, when you looked at it, he seemed 's if he might be a thousand years old or more.

"I dunno," says I, 'about no v'yage. That depends where you're bound to,' says I.

"Bound!" he says, half a-larfing. 'We're

bound to Tartaroo,' says he, 'if you know where that is, and we're a long time a-gitting there.'

"Where're you frum," says I.

"Where're we frum, Vanderwerken?" says he, a-turning to his fus' leftenant and larfing three-quarters this time.

"But Vanderwerken jus' scowled and grunted and grunted and scowled and said nothing. Then the Cap'n looks at me ag'in serious, and says—

"Never you mind, William, where we're frum. It's so long ago I've almost clean forgot.'

"Don't you keep a log?" says I.

"Why, dog gone it, William," says Cap'n Schmitt, 'I've writ and writ till I reckon I've about wore out the alphabet. I've writ all over the cabin walls and the furniture and the poop-deck and the sails! Log! I give her up,' says he, 'more'n a hundred years ago.'

"And that's a good while, too," says I, jus' to be kind o' sociable.

"I've been a-sailing yer since 1644," says he. 'Sometimes it seems to me like a million years, and then ag'in sometimes it seems 's if it begun only last Tuesday a week. My head's got queer over it,' says he, 'so that really I'm not jus' sure if I'm real or unreal. Would you mind poking me with your finger, Billy, and telling me what you think?'

"So, jus' to obleege him, I jabs him a couple of times in the cheek and the shoulder, and I says to him—

"Cap'n Schmitt, in my opinion you're not real real. You're about like tallow or cheese; you give when I poke you.'

"Half real and half unreal, s'pos'n we say," says he. 'Maybe so. I'm not flesh and I'm not sperrit. That's my view, too. What d'you think o' that, Vanderwerken?' says he, a-turning once more to his fus' leftenant. But the fus' leftenant he snuffles and scowls and looks at the cabin roof and declines to answer.

"Where did I understand you to say you hail frum, William?" says Cap'n Schmitt.

"Tom's River," says I.

"And where's that?"

"I told him; and when I mentioned Barnegat Bay, I seen him kind o' flinch, and I knowed why before I left him.

"That's in the United States, and the United States is the greatest country on this earth," says I; and then, knowing he hadn't heard any news lately, I went on and told him about General Washington and the Revolution.

"General Washington?" he says, trying

to remember. 'Was that the man that was left, a little baby, in the bulrushes?'

"'No, no!'" says I. 'He was fust in peace, fust in war, and fust in the hearts of his countrymen. You've got your mind on Moses.'

"'Hah!'" says he, 'maybe I have. I get mixed on people somehow, nowadays. And how is things, William, amongst the folks on shore? I git to hankering after 'em now

"I seen a flem gathering on his eyes as I spoke, and so I went on and told him about my baby grandson and his golden hair and blue eyes, and two lovely white front teeth and his cherry lips, until presently Cap'n Schmitt waves his hand at me and says—

"'Stop, William! Stop that! I can't stand it another minute!'

"Then he heaved a deep sigh, and he was about to speak when he caught sight o' Vanderwerken standing there in the corner. The Cap'n had something on his mind that he wanted to talk to me about private, and so he says—

"Vanderwerken, jus' run up on deck for a few minntes and look at the glass, and see if we're in the Tropic of Capricorn or in Cancer."

"Vanderwerken said he wouldn't go, and so Cap'n Schmitt flew at him and gripped him, and they had it over and over the cabin floor, until directly Cap'n Schmitt doubled Vanderwerken all up, jus' 's if he was putty, and flung him out and bolted the door. Through the window I seen Vanderwerken a-laying there, gradually coming back to shape ag'in, fust one dent bulging out and then another, jus' like one o' them rubber doll-babies, you know.

"Cap'n Schmitt then sets down ag'in by the table, and he says to me—

"'William, I'm a-beginning to git tired o' this kind o' thing. Here I've been a-setting and

playing seven-up with Vanderwerken fur two hundred years, and it's gitting to wear on me—Vanderwerken won't learn to play checkers; and so I'm yearning fur land and sunlight and the comforts o' home, and seeing you makes me want 'em wuss. If I could once git ashore in a new place and begin life over ag'in, I believe I could live down my past. Don't you think I could, William?'

"'I dunno,' says I, 'because I dunno nothing about your past.'



"'Took off my hat and cussed the thunderstorm.'"

and then. And speaking of babies ah, Billy!' says he to me, a red tear a-rolling over the crinkles on his face, 'what wouldn't I give to see one o' them ag'in? Tell me, William, do they still smile when the angels speaks to 'em in their sleep, and take notice, and all that kind o' thing, jus' the way they used to?'

"'Jus' the same,' says I; 'and shake their rattles and chew their gum-rings, and cry and keep the folks awake at nights. Jus' the very same.'

" 'Don't you know,' says he, 'what's the reason this yer ship keeps a-flying over the seas? Where 've you been, William? It was this way: In 1644, while I was a-trying to take the ship around the Horn, there was an awful thunderstorm that kep' a-driving us back and nearly capsized us. It made me so mad that I stood out on the poop-deck and took off my hat and cussed the thunderstorm; and because I did that I was condemned to keep flying over the seas and never to come to port. Tough luck, William, don't you think, jus' fur cussin' at one little thunderstorm?'

" 'Why don't you repent?' says I.

" 'Repent, William?' says he. 'What's the good of repenting when repenting won't take off the cuss that was put on me? No, sir, if repenting would 've lifted it, it would 've been lifted long ago.'

" 'And what will lift it?' says I.

" Cap'n Schmitt looked around to see if Vanderwerken was a-listening, and then, very solemn, he says: 'There's only one thing, William, that'll do the business, and that is fur a fair young maiden to marry me. And now look at it, Billy—if I can find a fair young maiden to marry me, the cuss will be removed; but, don't you see, I'm not 'lowed to go ashore to find a fair young maiden and to court her and to ask her—and there you are, blocked at both ends; no chance one way or another. Do you think that's a square deal on me, William? Blamed if I do. So what I want to do is to find that girl somehow and marry her and settle down and make a fresh start. Can you think how you could help me, Billy?'

" 'Settling down's all right,' says I, 'and starting fresh's all right, too, but I don't know about marrying.' Then I looks him over and says: 'Because girls is more particular now than they used to be. You're no longer young, you know. Did you say 1644? Well, Cap'n Schmitt, you're two hundred and fifty if you're a day, and that would seem old to most girls.'

" 'I know it,' says he, 'but I'm not so bad-looking, William, now, am I? And besides' (and then he looked around ag'in to find if Vanderwerken was a-lurking by the door), 'I'm jus' a-rolling in wealth.'

" 'You are?' says I.

" 'Jus' a-rolling in it.'

" 'What are you wuth?' says I, fur that very minute it come into my mind like a flash of lightning that him and Em'ly Smith might fix up a match betwixt 'em if there was anything in it fur me.

" 'What am I wuth?' says Cap'n Schmitt. 'Well, maybe I can't put it in straight figures or in fractions, but, Billy, I pledge you my word I have billions of dollars and tons of diamonds and jewellery, to say nothing of fus' mortgages and Government bonds; more'n you can count,' says he.

" 'Big talk,' I says, 'never went fur with me, Cap'n Schmitt. Seein'g's believing, and nothing else is. Where is this stuff?'

" 'It's buried,' says he, 'buried good and tight.'

" 'Buried for good, you mean,' says I, just to draw him on.

" 'Buried on the beach of Barnegat Bay,' says he, 'but buried where you can't find it without the chart; and I've got the chart. Howsomedever,' says he, 'the half of it goes to the man who finds the girl that will have me.'

" 'Do you mean that, Cap'n Schmitt?' says I.

" 'I'll write it and sign it and seal it,' says he. 'Half's enough for me if I have love's young dream along with it.'

" 'Cap'n Schmitt,' says I, 'it comes to my mind that maybe I can help you out. But before we strike a bargain, tell me if you prefer a blonde or a brunette?'

" 'It don't make no great difference,' says he, a-waving his hand; 'but brunettes is my favourites.'

" 'Dark brunettes, or tollably light brunettes?'

" 'Rather dark,' says he; 'but I don't care fur freckles.'

" 'I think I know one that'll suit you,' says I.

" 'I make no p'int about beauty,' says he. 'I want her to be soulful. Her soul must look out of her eyes. Her heart must throb in unison with mine—throb for throb. Git me such a wife as that, William, and half the treasure is yourn and welcome.'

" 'Give me a glance at that chart, jus' for a minute, Cap'n, will you?' says I.

" Cap'n Schmitt turned around to get the chart out of the locker, when suddenly he dropped his hands and said—

" 'What is that? D'ye hear that?'

" 'I heard it well enough. Em'ly Smith, out there in the forecandle, had struck up and was singing 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,' and she sung it fine, too.

" 'Oh, that's nothing,' says I, fur I wanted to get my hands on the chart and to have the contract signed before I introduced him to Em'ly. 'That's Vanderwerken,' says I.

" 'Vauderwerken's grandmother!' he

says, wild with excitement. 'You have to steady yourself ag'in' something when Vanderwerken sings. That's an angel, or I'm no judge. Let me get out o' that door.'

"Cap'n Schmitt," says I, putting myself betwixt him and the door, 'I don't want

"Heavenly, ain't it?' says he.

"Yes," says I, 'heavenly it is. And that's the girl I had in my mind fur you if you'd only play fair about that Barnegat Bay business. I never see such a fool as you—a-throwing away the only chance you're ever likely to git.'

"Then Cap'n Schmitt begun to quiet down, and he says—

"She come along with you, did she?'

"She did," says I. 'I'm her protector; and I'm a-going to protect her, too.'

"I'll tell you, William," says he, 'what I'll do. Give me a look at her; and if I fancy her, half the treasure's yourn.'

"No," says I; 'I'm a-taking no chances. Give me the chart or lose Em'ly.'

"Is that her name?" says he. 'Em'ly! I always thought it lovely. Em'ly what?'

"Smith," says I; 'pretty much the

same name as yourn. Hardly any trouble to change it.'

"Cap'n Schmitt begun to think; and while he was setting there thinking, the thirteenth verse come a-floating in the cabin window, and it was clear to me something or other was making Em'ly Smith do her best. She sung like a canary. As her voice died away, Cap'n Schmitt got up and went to the cupboard and takes out the chart and hands it to me and says—

"Billy, I'll do it! But you'll divide even with me if you get there fust? Give me your hand on it.' And so I shook hands with him, and then we went on deck.

"There was a kind o' half gloom, so's you couldn't see things quite plain. I glanced at the binnacle, and found the compass a-p'inting jus' the way the ship was a-going. It always did that. Then I looked at my watch, and it was jus' midnight. The works was a-going, but the hands never moved from twelve whilst I was on that ship. Fur away in the fore-castle I could see the whites of Em'ly Smith's eyes as we moved towards her.

"There she was, still a-singing, and Vander-



"And Vanderwerken set aside of her on another bucket."

no trouble, but you can't pass me till I see that chart.'

"His eyes flamed fire, and he looked like a fiend as he drewed his cutlass and made at me. But I picks up a chair, and I says to him: 'Now, steady, steady, my man! Don't try no game o' bluff with me. Hand out that chart.'

"I'll kill you!" says he, making a pass at me. 'Git out o' my way!' He struck at me, but I ketched the blade on the leg o' the chair.

"You can't skeer me," says I. 'What are you, anyway? You're nothing but a sceptre; and if I couldn't whip a sceptre, I'd be ashamed to go home and meet my relations.'

"He seen I meant business, so then he begun to halloa for Vanderwerken.

"Never mind Vanderwerken," says I. 'The door's locked; and i. it wasn't, I'm not afeared o' Vanderwerken.'

"Just then we ketched the sound o' Em'ly Smith's voice ag'in. She was on the eleventh verse of 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.' Cap'n Schmitt dropped the p'int of his cutlass and listened.

werken set aside of her on another bucket. He had a-holt of her hand, and his eyes was shet, and he was jus' a-drinking in the music, perfectly happy.

"So when we come near, Cap'n Schmitt whispers to me—

" 'She's somewhat darker than I expected.' "

" 'It's the gloom,' I says. 'She shows off better in the daylight.' "

" 'And I don't see,' says he, 'how we can honestly call her a fair young maiden; and that's the kind, you remember, that I have to have, to lift the cuss.' "

" 'She's thirty-six,' says I; 'and that's very young compared with two hundred and fifty; and as fur fair, what I think is that she has to be fair in the sense that she'll play fair—jus' be honest, you know; and Em'ly Smith'll do that every time.' "

"Em'ly Smith stopped singing jus' then, and Vanderwerken, keeping his eyes shet, says: 'More! more! let's have some more, Em'ly.' So then Em'ly Smith starts in on the fifteenth verse; and as she drawed to the end of it, Cap'n Schmitt stepped over and kicked the bucket frum underneath Vanderwerken, dropping him on the deck.

"Then Cap'n Schmitt says to her—

" 'Which verse was that, Em'ly?' "

" 'The fifteenth,' says she.

" 'Now give us the sixteenth,' says he, and so Em'ly begun on the sixteenth.

"When she stopped, Cap'n Schmitt drawed me over to one side, and says he: 'I think maybe we can make a trade, William. Em'ly wouldn't be jus' my fus' choice, but still there's a charm about her, particularly about her singing. I'm a little shy with girls,' says he. 'Would you mind opening out the subject to her fur me?' "

"So I sets down alongside of Em'ly, on Vanderwerken's bucket, whilst Cap'n Schmitt goes to the bulwark and looks over; and whilst Em'ly was a good deal set up by Cap'n Schmitt's offer, she felt she was obleeged to decline it. She said she was already engaged to Arcturus Williams, the President of the Sons and Daughters and Brothers and Sisters of Aaron, of the Tribe of Levi, of Rising Sun, Philadelphia; and that, anyhow, even if she was willing to throw Arcturus over, she should feel like going a little slow about marrying a man who seemed to her to be half sceptre and half pirate.

"Of course, I daresn't say this to Cap'n Schmitt, or there'd be trouble right off, and the Barnegat Bay treasure would never come my way; so I had to resort to duplicity.

"Calling Cap'n Schmitt over by the fore-castle scuttle, I says to him—

" 'Em'ly says she prefers Vanderwerken.' "

"He was pretty mad. 'I'll have to keel-haul Vanderwerken yet,' says he.

" 'But Em'ly has a kind heart, and she's willing to sacrifice her feelings to lift the cuss frum you; only she must have conditions.' "

" 'What conditions?' says Cap'n Schmitt.

" 'She promised her ma afore she left home that if she ever got married, she wouldn't have any parson to marry her but Brother Wiley of the Brick Church; and if you're willing to wait till she can git him, she's yourn with love and kind regards.' "

" 'That's not unreasonable,' says Cap'n Schmitt; 'but what I want to know is: How am I and Brother Wiley and Em'ly Smith going to come together?' "

"So we talked it over fur a while, and finally Cap'n Schmitt agreed that me and Em'ly should try to git ashore, and hunt up Brother Wiley, and meet Cap'n Schmitt's ship three miles off Barnegat Light on the fifteenth of March, at twelve o'clock midnight ezzackly.

"Then we shook hands all around, and Cap'n Schmitt tenderly kissed Em'ly good-bye. As I helped her over the side into our boat, I handed the Barnegat Bay chart to Cap'n Schmitt to hold fur a minute; and when all was ready, he put the chart at me and says—

" 'Promise me now, William, that you will divide fair; but don't cross your breath to it, fur that won't go here!' "

"Well, sir, I don't know what made me do it, but afore I could take the chart out of his hands I crossed my breath, and that very minute there was a loud BANG! and I was whirled round and round in the air and become unconscious.

"When I come to, I found myself laying in one end of the boat, whilst Em'ly Smith set in the other end singing softly to herself the nineteenth verse of 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.' The sun was jus' a-gitting up, and the flood tide was a-sweeping the boat into Delaware Bay. Well, we run ashore at Cape May, and Em'ly and me come home on the train. But both she and Brother Wiley backed dead out on the fifteenth of March, and on the sixteenth she married President Arcturus Williams, of Rising Sun.

"As for that Barnegat Bay treasure, there it's a-laying and there it'll go on a-laying, whilst William Potsherd, who might 've been a millionaire, can't rub two dollars together."

THE RED-HAIRED GIRL.

By S. BARING-GOULD.*



IN 1876 we took a house in one of the best streets and parts of B——. I do not give the name of the street or the number of the house, because the circumstances

that occurred in that place were such as to make people nervous, and shy—unreasonably so—of taking those lodgings, after reading our experiences therein.

We were a small family—my husband, a grown-up daughter, and myself; and we had two maids—a cook, and the other was house and parlour maid in one. We had not been a fortnight in the house before my daughter said to me one morning: "Mamma, I do not like Jane"—that was our house-parlourmaid.

"Why so?" I asked. "She seems respectable, and she does her work systematically. I have no fault to find with her, none whatever."

"She may do her work," said Bessie, my daughter, "but I dislike inquisitiveness."

"Inquisitiveness!" I exclaimed. "What do you mean? Has she been looking in your drawers?"

"No, mamma, but she watches me. It is hot weather now, and when I am in my room, occasionally, I leave my door open whilst writing a letter, or doing any little bit of needlework, and then I am almost certain to hear her outside. If I turn sharply round, I see her slipping out of sight. It is most annoying. I really was unaware that I was such an interesting personage as to make it worth anyone's while to spy out my proceedings."

"Nonsense, my dear. You are sure it is Jane?"

"Well—I suppose so." There was a

slight hesitation in her voice. "If not Jane, who can it be?"

"Are you sure it is not cook?"

"Oh, no, it is not cook; she is busy in the kitchen. I have heard her there, when I have gone outside my room upon the landing, after having caught that girl watching me."

"If you have caught her," said I, "I suppose you spoke to her about her impropriety."

"Well, caught is the wrong word. I have not actually *caught* her at it. Only to-day I distinctly heard her at my door, and I saw her back as she turned to run away, when I went towards her."

"But you followed her, of course?"

"Yes, but I did not find her on the landing when I got outside."

"Where was she, then?"

"I don't know."

"But did you not go and see?"

"She slipped away with astonishing celerity," said Bessie.

"I can take no steps in the matter. If she does it again, speak to her and remonstrate."

"But I never have a chance. She is gone in a moment."

"She cannot get away so quickly as all that."

"Somehow she does."

"And you are sure it is Jane?" again I asked; and again she replied: "If not Jane, who else can it be? There is no one else in the house."

So this unpleasant matter ended, for the time. The next intimation of something of the sort proceeded from another quarter—in fact, from Jane herself. She came to me some days later and said, with some embarrassment in her tone—

"If you please, ma'am, if I do not give satisfaction, I would rather leave the situation."

"Leave!" I exclaimed. "Why, I have not given you the slightest cause. I have not found fault with you for anything as yet, have I, Jane? On the contrary, I have been much pleased with the thoroughness of your work. And you are always tidy and obliging."

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"It isn't that, ma'am; but I don't like being watched whatever I do."

"Watched!" I repeated. "What do you mean? You surely do not suppose that I am running after you when you are engaged on your occupations. I assure you I have other and more important things to do."

"No, ma'am, I don't suppose you do."

"Then who watches you?"

"I think it must be Miss Bessie."

"Miss Bessie!" I could say no more, I was so astounded.

"Yes, ma'am. When I am sweeping out a room, and my back is turned, I hear her at the door; and when I turn myself about, I just catch a glimpse of her running away. I see her skirts——"

"Miss Bessie is above doing anything of the sort."

"If it is not Miss Bessie, who is it, ma'am?"

There was a tone of indecision in her voice.

"My good Jane," said I, "set your mind at rest. Miss Bessie could not act as you suppose. Have you seen her on these occasions and assured yourself that it is she?"

"No, ma'am, I've not, so to speak, seen her face; but I know it ain't cook, and I'm sure it ain't you, ma'am, so who else can it be?"

I considered for some moments, and the maid stood before me in dubious mood.

"You say you saw her skirts. Did you recognise the gown? What did she wear?"

"It was a light cotton print—more like a maid's morning dress."

"Well, set your mind at ease; Miss Bessie has not got such a frock as you describe."

"I don't think she has," said Jane; "but there was some-one at the door, watching me, who ran away when I turned myself about."

"Did she run upstairs or down?"

"I don't know. I did go out on the landing, but there was no one there. I'm sure it wasn't cook, for I heard her clattering the dishes down in the kitchen at the time."

"Well, Jane, there is some mystery in this. I will not accept your notice; we will let matters stand over till we can look into this complaint of yours and discover the rights of it."

"Thank you, ma'am. I'm very comfortable here, but it is unpleasant to suppose that one is not trusted, and is spied on wherever one goes and whatever one is about."



"She put her arm up and turned and ran downstairs."

A week later, after dinner one evening, when Bessie and I had quitted the table and left my husband to his smoke, Bessie said to me, when we were in the drawing-room together: "Mamma, it is not Jane."

"What is not Jane?" I asked.

"It is not Jane who watches me."

"Who can it be, then?"

"I don't know."

"And how is it that you are confident that you are not being observed by Jane?"

"Because I have seen her—that is to say, her head."

"When? where?"

"Whilst dressing for dinner. I was before the glass doing my hair, when I saw in the mirror someone behind me. I had only the two candles lighted on the table, and the room was otherwise dark. I thought I heard someone stirring—just the sort of stealthy step I have come to recognise as having troubled me so often. I did not turn, but looked steadily before me into the glass, and I could see reflected therein someone—a woman with red hair. Then I moved from my place quickly. I heard steps of some person hurrying away, but I saw no one then."

"The door was open?"

"No, it was shut."

"But where did she go?"

"I do not know, mamma. I looked everywhere in the room and could find no one. I have been quite upset. I cannot tell what to think of this. I feel utterly unhinged."

"I noticed at table that you did not appear well, but I said nothing about it. Your father gets so alarmed, and fidgets and fusses, if he thinks that there is anything the matter with you. But this is a most extraordinary story."

"It is an extraordinary fact," said Bessie.

"You have searched your room thoroughly?"

"I have looked into every corner."

"And there is no one there?"

"No one. Would you mind, mamma, sleeping with me to-night? I am so frightened. Do you think it can be a ghost?"

"Ghost? Fiddlesticks!"

I made some excuse to my husband and spent the night in Bessie's room. There was no disturbance that night of any sort, and although my daughter was excited and unable to sleep till long after midnight, she did fall into refreshing slumber at last, and in the morning said to me: "Mamma, I think I must have fancied that I saw something in

the glass. I dare say my nerves were overwrought."

I was greatly relieved to hear this, and I came to much the same conclusion as did Bessie, but was again bewildered, and my mind unsettled by Jane, who came to me just before lunch, when I was alone, and said—

"Please, ma'am, it's only fair to say, but it's not Miss Bessie."

"What is not Miss Bessie? I mean, who is not Miss Bessie?"

"Her as is spying on me."

"I told you it could not be she. Who is it?"

"Please, ma'am, I don't know. It's a red-haired girl."

"But, Jane, be serious. There is no red-haired girl in the house."

"I know there ain't, ma'am. But for all that, she spies on me."

"Be reasonable, Jane," I said, disguising the shock her words produced on me. "If there be no red-haired girl in the house, how can you have one watching you?"

"I don't know; but one does."

"How do you know that she is red-haired?"

"Because I have seen her."

"When?"

"This morning."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, ma'am. I was going upstairs, when I heard steps coming softly after me—the back stairs, ma'am; they're rather dark and steep, and there's no carpet on them, as on the front stairs, and I was sure I heard someone following me; so I twisted about, thinking it might be cook, but it wasn't. I saw a young woman in a print dress, and the light as came from the window at the side fell on her head, and it was carrots—reg'lar carrots."

"Did you see her face?"

"No, ma'am; she put her arm up and turned and ran downstairs, and I went after her, but I never found her."

"You followed her—how far?"

"To the kitchen. Cook was there. And I said to cook, says I: 'Did you see a girl come this way?' And she said, short-like: 'No.'"

"And cook saw nothing at all?"

"Nothing. She didn't seem best pleased at my axing. I suppose I frightened her, as I'd been telling her about how I was followed and spied on."

I mused a moment only, and then said solemnly—

"Jane, what you want is a *pill*. You are

suffering from hallucinations. I know a case very much like yours; and take my word for it that, in your condition of liver or digestion, a pill is a sovereign remedy. Set your mind at rest; this is a mere delusion, caused by pressure on the optic nerve. I will give you a pill to-night when you go to bed, another to-morrow, a third on the day after, and that will settle the red-haired girl. You will see no more of her."

"You think so, ma'am?"

"I am sure of it."

On consideration, I thought it as well to mention the matter to the cook, a strange, reserved woman, not given to talking, who did her work admirably, but whom, for some inexplicable reason, I did not like. If I had considered a little further as to how to broach the subject, I should perhaps have proved more successful; but by not doing so I rushed the question and obtained no satisfaction.

I had gone down to the kitchen to order dinner, and the difficult question had arisen how to dispose of the scraps from yesterday's joint.

"Rissoles, ma'am?"

"No," said I, "not rissoles. Your master objects to them."

"Then perhaps croquets?"

"They are only rissoles in disguise."

"Perhaps cottage pie?"

"No, that is inorganic rissole, a sort of protoplasm out of which rissoles are developed."

"Then, ma'am, I might make a hash."

"Not an ordinary, bare-faced, rudimentary hash."

"No, ma'am, with French mushrooms, or truffles, or tomatoes."

"Well—yes—perhaps. By the way, talking of tomatoes, who is that red-haired girl who has been about the house?"

"Can't say, ma'am."

I noticed at once that the eyes of the cook contracted, her lips tightened, and her face assumed a half-defiant, half-terrified look.

"You have not many friends in this place, have you, cook?"

"No, ma'am, none."

"Then who can she be?"

"Can't say, ma'am."

"You can throw no light on the matter? It is very unsatisfactory having a person about the house—and she has been seen upstairs—of whom one knows nothing."

"No doubt, ma'am."

"And you cannot enlighten me?"

"She is no friend of mine."

"Nor is she of Jane's. Jane spoke to me

about her. Has she remarked concerning this girl to you?"

"Can't say, ma'am, as I notice all Jane says. She talks a good deal."

"You see, there must be someone who is a stranger and who has access to this house. It is most awkward."

"Very so, ma'am."

I could get nothing more from the cook. I might as well have talked to a log; and, indeed, her face assumed a wooden look as I continued to speak to her on the matter. So I sighed and said—

"Very well, hash with tomato," and went upstairs.

A few days later the house-parlourmaid remarked to me—

"Please, ma'am, may I have another pill?"

"Pill!" I exclaimed. "Why?"

"Because I have seen her again. She was behind the curtains, and I caught her putting out her red head to look at me."

"Did you see her face?"

"No; she up with her arm over it and scuttled away."

"This is strange. I do not think I have more than two podophyllin pills left in the box, but to those you are welcome. Only I should recommend a different treatment. Instead of taking them yourself, the moment you see, or fancy that you see, the red-haired girl, go at her with the box and threaten to administer the pills to her. That will rout her, if anything will."

"But she will not stop for the pills."

"The threat of having them forced on her every time she shows herself will disconcert her. Conceive, I am supposing, that on each occasion Miss Bessie, or I, were to meet you on the stairs, in a room, on the landing, in the hall, we were to rush on you and force, let us say, castor-oil globules between your lips. You would give notice at once."

"Yes; so I should, ma'am."

"Well, try this upon the red-haired girl. It will prove infallible."

"Thank you, ma'am; what you say seems reasonable."

Whether Bessie saw more of the puzzling apparition, I cannot say. She spoke no further on the matter to me; but that may have been so as to cause me no further uneasiness. I was unable to resolve the question to my own satisfaction—whether what had been seen was a real person, who obtained access to the house in some unaccountable manner, or whether it was, what I have called it, an apparition.

As far as I could ascertain, nothing had been taken away. The movements of the red-haired girl were not those of one who sought to pilfer. They seemed to me rather those of one not in her right mind; and on this supposition I made inquiries in the neighbourhood as to the existence in our street, in any of the adjoining houses, of a person wanting in her wits, who was suffered to run about at will. But I could obtain no information that at all threw light on a point to me so perplexing.

Hitherto I had not mentioned the topic to my husband. I knew so well that I should obtain no help from him, that I made no effort to seek it. He would "Pish!" and "Pshaw!" and make some slighting reference to women's intellects, and not further trouble himself about the matter.

But one day, to my great astonishment, he referred to it himself.

"Julia," said he, "do you observe how I have cut myself in shaving?"

"Yes, dear," I replied. "You have cotton wool sticking to your jaw, as if you were growing a white whisker on one side."

"It bled a great deal," said he.

"I am sorry to hear it."

"And I mopped up the blood with the new toilet-cover."

"Never!" I exclaimed.

"You haven't been so foolish as to do that?"

"Yes. And that is just like you. You are much more concerned about your toilet-cover being stained than about my poor cheek which is gashed."

"You were very clumsy to do it," was all I could say. Married people are not always careful to preserve the amenities in private life. It is a pity, but it is so.

"It was due to no clumsiness on my part," said he; "though I do allow my nerves have been so shaken, broken, by married life, that I cannot always command my hand, as was the case when I was a bachelor. But this time it was due to that new, stupid, red-haired servant you have introduced into the house without consulting me or my pocket."

"Red-haired servant!" I echoed.

"Yes, that red-haired girl I have seen

about. She thrusts herself into my study in a most offensive and objectionable way. But the climax of all was this morning, when I was shaving. I stood in my shirt before the glass, and had lathered my face, and was engaged on my right jaw, when that red-haired girl rushed between me and the mirror with both her elbows up, screening her face with her arms, and her head bowed. I started back, and in so doing cut myself."

"Where did she come from?"

"How can I tell? I did not expect to see anyone."

"Then where did she go?"

"I do not know; I was too concerned about my bleeding jaw to look about me. That girl must be dismissed."



"That red-haired girl rushed between me and the mirror."

"I wish she could be dismissed," I said.

"What do you mean?"

I did not answer my husband, for I really did not know what answer to make.

I was now the only person in the house who had not seen the red-haired girl, except possibly the cook, from whom I could gather nothing, but whom I suspected of knowing more concerning this mysterious apparition than she chose to admit. That what had been seen by Bessie and Jane was a supernatural visitant, I now felt convinced, seeing that it had appeared to that least imaginative and most commonplace of all individuals, my husband. By no mental process could he have been got to imagine anything. He certainly did see this red-haired girl, and that no living, corporeal maid had been in his dressing-room at the time I was perfectly certain.

I was soon, however, myself to be included in the number of those before whose eyes she appeared. It was in this wise.

Cook had gone out to do some marketing. I was in the breakfast-room, when, wanting a funnel to fill a little phial of brandy I always keep on the washstand in case of emergencies, I went to the head of the kitchen stairs, to descend and fetch what I required. Then I was aware of a great clattering of the fire-irons below, and a banging about of the boiler and grate. I went down the steps very hastily and entered the kitchen.

There I saw a figure of a short-set girl in a shabby cotton gown, not over clean, and slipshod, stooping before the stove, and striking the fender with the iron poker. She had fiery red hair, very untidy.

I uttered an exclamation.

Instantly she dropped the poker, and covering her face with her arms, uttering a strange, low cry, she dashed round the kitchen table, making nearly the complete circuit, and then swept past me, and I heard her clattering up the kitchen stairs.

I was too much taken aback to follow. I stood as one petrified. I felt dazed and unable to trust either my eyes or my ears.

Something like a minute must have elapsed before I had sufficiently recovered to turn and leave the kitchen. Then I ascended slowly and, I confess, nervously. I was fearful lest I should find the red-haired girl cowering against the wall, and that I should have to pass her.

But nothing was to be seen. I reached the hall, and saw that no door was open

from it except that of the breakfast-room. I entered and thoroughly examined every recess, corner, and conceivable hiding-place, but could find no one there. Then I ascended the staircase, with my hand on the balustrade, and searched all the rooms on the first floor, without the least success. Above were the servants' apartments, and I now resolved on mounting to them. Here the staircase was uncarpeted. As I was ascending, I heard Jane at work in her room. I then heard her come out hastily upon the landing. At the same moment, with a rush past me, uttering the same moan, went the red-haired girl. I am sure I felt her skirts sweep my dress. I did not notice her till she was close upon me, but I did distinctly see her as she passed. I turned, and saw no more.

I at once mounted to the landing where was Jane.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Please, ma'am, I've seen the red-haired girl again, and I did as you recommended. I went at her rattling the pill-box, and she turned and ran downstairs. Did you see her, ma'am, as you came up?"

"How inexplicable!" I said. I would not admit to Jane that I had seen the apparition.

The situation remained unaltered for a week. The mystery was unsolved. No fresh light had been thrown on it. I did not again see or hear anything out of the way; nor did my husband, I presume, for he made no further remarks relative to the extra servant who had caused him so much annoyance. I presume he supposed that I had summarily dismissed her. This I conjectured from a smugness assumed by his face, such as it always acquired when he had carried a point against me—which was not often.

However, one evening, abruptly, we had a new sensation. My husband, Bessie, and I were at dinner, and we were partaking of the soup, Jane standing by, waiting to change our plates and to remove the tureen, when we dropped our spoons, alarmed by fearful screams issuing from the kitchen. By the way, characteristically, my husband finished his soup before he laid down the spoon and said—

"Good gracious! What is that?"

Bessie, Jane, and I were by this time at the door, and we rushed together to the kitchen stairs, and one after the other ran down them. I was the first to enter, and I saw cook wrapped in flames, and a paraffin



"I saw cook wrapped in flames."

lamp on the floor broken, and the blazing oil flowing over it.

I had sufficient presence of mind to catch up the cocoanut matting which was not impregnated with the oil, and to throw it round cook, wrap her tightly in it, and force her down on the floor where not overflowed by the oil. I held her thus, and Bessie succoured me. Jane was too frightened to do other than scream. The cries of the burnt woman were terrible. Presently my husband appeared.

"Dear me! Bless me! Good gracious!" he said.

"You go away and fetch a doctor," I called to him; "you can be of no possible service here—you only get in our way."

"But the dinner?"

"Bother the dinner! Run for a surgeon."

In a little while we had removed the poor woman to her room, she shrieking the whole way upstairs; and, when there, we laid her on her bed, and kept her folded in the cocoanut matting till a medical man arrived, in spite of her struggles to be free. My husband, on this occasion, acted with commendable promptness; but whether because he was impatient for the completion of his meal, or whether his sluggish nature was for once touched with human sympathy, it is not for me to say.

All I know is that, so soon as the surgeon was there, I dismissed Jane with "There, go and get your master the rest of his dinner, and leave us with cook."

The poor creature was frightfully burnt. She was attended to devotedly by myself and Bessie, till a nurse was obtained from the hospital. For hours she was as one mad with terror as much as with pain.

Next day she was quieter and sent for me. I hastened to her, and she begged the nurse to leave the room. I took a chair and seated myself by her bedside, and expressed

my profound commiseration, and told her that I should like to know how the accident had taken place.

"Ma'am, it was the red-haired girl did it."

"The red-haired girl!"

"Yes, ma'am. I took a lamp to see how the fish was getting on, and all at once I saw her rush straight at me, and I—I backed, thinking she would knock me down, and the lamp fell over and smashed, and my clothes caught, and——"

"Oh, cook! you should not have taken the lamp."

"It's done. And she would never leave me alone till she had burnt or scalded me. You needn't be afraid—she don't haunt the house. It is *me* she has haunted, because of what I did to her."

"Then you know her?"

"She was in service with me, as kitchen-maid, at my last place, near Cambridge. I took a sort of hate against her, she was such a slattern and so inquisitive. She peeped into my letters, and turned out my box and drawers, she was ever prying; and when I spoke to her, she was that sauncy! I reg'lar hated her. And one day she was kneeling by the stove, and I was there, too, and I suppose the devil possessed me, for I upset the boiler as was on the hot-plate right upon her, just as she looked up, and it poured over her face, and bosom, and arms, and scalded her that dreadful, she died. And since then she has haunted me. But she'll do so no more. She won't trouble you further. She has done for me, as she has always minded to do, since I scalded her to death."

The unhappy woman did not recover.

"Dear me! no hope?" said my husband, when informed that the surgeon despaired of her. "And good cooks are so scarce. By the way, that red-haired girl?"

"Gone—gone for ever," I said.



THE PHANTOM FISHERMAN.

BY ALICK MUNRO,*

Author of "A Woman of Wiles."



IX very nice trout They are. I wouldn't grumble if I were you. Oh, yes, it's a good fishing day, I know, and you've been on a grand bit of water. You *might* have done better, I won't deny; but it isn't a blank day, boy, when you creel half a dozen. I remember once—— Hum! what fly did you kill them with? Blue dun? A good fly, too, at this time of year; but give me a March-brown, the best fly that's made, for the early months.

I remember one day when I couldn't kill with it, though. It was a grand day that, too—4th of May, in the year that your father was married; you'll see presently how I come to remember the date so well. I had taken three dozen out of the same water the day before, though there were big, white clouds about, and a keen nor'-easter blowing. It was a kind bit o' water that, I tell you, the best in Perthshire. When I showed my basket to Forsyth (you'll have heard your mother speak of Colin Forsyth, of Glen-mosset; he was your father's best man), he just laughed and said they'd come in very handy for to-morrow, as he was going to Edinburgh and would be bringing his lawyer back to dinner.

"We'll have them for breakfast," said I. "A trout shouldn't be kept, and I'll promise you more in time for dinner."

"You won't rise a fish to-morrow," he answered, "nor see one."

"Don't malign your own bonnie river!" I said. "I'll rise, and land, a basketful."

You'll see how I kept my promise.

I was up next morning early. Never make half a day do for fishing, boy, if you can get the whole day. I looked at the weather and laughed, because Colin had said

I shouldn't rise a fish on a day like this. There was a soft, warm wind blowing, just enough to ripple the long, quiet pools and make an up-stream cast fall like a gossamer. The water in the shallows had the clear amber of pale sherry, shading off in the deeper parts through brown October to bottled stout in the holes. There was peat-water in it, you see; and black peat-water is the next most beautiful thing in Nature after the flashing crystal of a chalk-stream. You couldn't see much of the river at a time, because of the sharp turns it took, and the alder-trees that lined one bank; and when I made my first cast, I didn't see any trout moving near me. But they were moving, because I heard them. In the pool above me I could hear them rising—four or five splashes in the time it took me to put my rod together; and by the sound, they weren't four-inch fingerlings either.

I thought it queer, mind you, that nothing was moving where I could see it; and when I had fished that pool and the next, and the next after that, and hadn't seen a fish, I thought it queerer still, because all the time I could hear them every now and then falling back into the water with a plop—the kind of dull plop a fish makes when he meets the water with his mouth open, after missing his fly. But the splashes were always out of sight, round a rock, or a tree, or a bunch of alder-coppice, and I never saw a scale of the fish that made them. And there was another queer thing; the rising fish were all above me, in the direction in which I was fishing. Beside me and behind me, I don't think a fin moved all day. I fished up four miles of water, and tried every likely fly in my book, and some unlikely ones; and the same thing went on for every reach and eddy of the four miles. I even hunted under stones for worms, and tried them up-stream, though I knew Forsyth didn't like that.

The four-mile post was the march of his water, and when I reached it, I sat down and had my lunch and a pipe, and got my temper back.

Now, I knew well enough that there's no accounting for the ways of a trout. He's

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"Again the line whistled, almost at my ear, but I couldn't see it."

the "unexpectedest" fish that swims. One day he'll be pig-headed and sulky, and the next he'll almost court you. Bless you, he's just like a woman! If it wasn't for his tantrums, he wouldn't be half so fascinating as he is. Besides, I've fished years enough to learn philosophy. So I threw away my temper with the sandwich-papers and started to try the water over again, down-stream.

No use. Fish rising out of sight below me now, but never a one near me or behind me. I began to think the devil was in it, and I wondered how Forsyth came to know beforehand what it would be like. Then suddenly I stopped and listened, for I heard the scream of a reel as the line ran out. There was somebody fishing in front of me,

and his reel sang of better luck than I was having; for it meant that he was fast in a fish.

"Confound him!" I said. "I wonder what flies he has on? I'll go and ask him!"

I stuck the butt-spike of my rod in the earth and started to clamber over a bit of rough ground which lay between me and the pool from which the sound of the reel came; but when I got to the top of a knoll and looked down on the pool, there was no one there. The water had the same dead look that had struck me all day, the look of being utterly uninhabited. But the other fellow had found fish in it, if the whirr of a reel went for anything.

But he wasn't here now. He seemed to

be fishing quicker even than I was, so I went back to my rod and took it to pieces. I meant to walk on till I overtook him, and if he would give me one of the flies he was killing with, I would put my rod together again; if he wouldn't, or if I had already tried the fly, I would go home and tell Forsyth that I'd rather go out on a day when he hadn't asked a wizard to fish his water.

In about ten minutes I heard his reel again—the whirr as the line ran out, the silence as he humoured his fish, and the *crr-crr-crr-crr-crrk!* as he reeled him in. I pushed my way through a clump of brambles and came upon the water.

It was a long, straight reach, shallow on the side on which I was standing, and shelving down to black water under the opposite bank. The wind made a ripple over the deeper water, but for half-a-dozen yards on my side the surface was dead smooth. There was no one in sight. And yet I didn't see how a man could have creeled his fish and gone away in the time it took me to push through the brambles.

Then I heard the whistle of a line through the air, quite close to me, and I think I shivered. The sun was glinting bright from the water, but a cloud moved over the young bracken on the hillside before me, and the air had taken a sudden chill. I have fished for grayling in Yorkshire when the snow was on the ground and the shallow waters near the edge were frozen hard enough to stand on. It was not the cold which made me tremble now and feel afraid. In the bright sunshine of that May afternoon I shivered heavily, and needles of sweat pricked me under my clothes.

Again the line whistled, almost at my ear, but I couldn't see it.

A fish rose in the shade of the other bank—the first I had seen that day. I saw the yellow gleam of his belly as he turned, and again I heard the whirr of the line from the reel. The fish came my way, into the shallows, and a long V spread across the still water in his wake, as though a tight casting-line were cutting it. I even fancied I saw drops from the wet line fall into the fork of the V. The trout came close to my bank, and the *crr-crr-crrk!* of the reel spoke again. I waited to see no more.

I turned and ran, and did not stop until I had run half a mile and had twice more heard the scream of that phantom reel behind me.

* * * * *

Forsyth chaffed me a little at dinner that

night and said he didn't think a ghost in the sunlight would have made me run; but later, over our last pipe in the gunroom, when the lawyer from Edinburgh had gone to bed, he told me the story.

His great uncle, Sir Hector Forsyth, was one of Wellington's captains, and many a tale I heard afterwards of his deeds of valour. He was a tall, fair man, with a Viking's face and the strength of a bull; and there is one story about him, how at the storming of Ciudad Rodrigo—but I'll tell you that some other night. In the spring of the year after Waterloo he brought his bride home to Glenmosset. She was a Spanish woman, with great, black eyes, and hair that rippled like water over stones; and the story was that Sir Hector had carried her off from Badajoz on the day of that great assault and had fought a duel for her possession. Men said that he loved her as a dog loves its mistress, and that in return she treated him, the big Viking-man, as few women would treat a dog. She hated him. For she had left her lover behind her in Spain.

On the 4th of May, nine days after he had brought her to his Highland home, she struck at him with a dagger when he kissed her for "Good morning." The dagger grazed his rib, for she had aimed at his heart. The wound was a slight one, and he laughed, they say, and kissed her again and again as payment for the blow. He was a man that a woman should love, I think; but she had tried to murder him.

Maybe she had done that before, and he had come to regard it as a thing not to be bothered about overmuch. I don't say that that was his thought, and I think his heart was sorer than his rib when he took his rod down and went down to fish; for tigress as she was, he loved her.

In the evening he returned, with his basket loaded with trout, and his big heart hungering for the gentleness of love. He was told that a stranger—a foreign gentleman—had come soon after he went out to fish, and that his wife had spent the day in the stranger's company. He went in and welcomed the man.

Dinner was served for three that night—for Sir Hector and his wife, and for the lover from Spain; for that was what the stranger was. It must have been a queer dinner-party that, but the tale goes that it was a merry one. If these three had a tragedy to play, they did not play it before the servants. You will hear hard things said of Spaniards, and many of them will be true. It is true, for



"'A dagger was in her heart.'"

instance, that a Spaniard is always cruel, and often even treacherous in his cruelty; but when it comes to dying—why, *then*, he is the gentleman of the world. Two of these three were Spaniards, and it was with a look of pride that Colin Forsyth told me that his great-uncle made a worthy third. For Sir Hector's jest was the freshest, and his laugh the loudest and the gayest of the three.

"Man," I remember Colin saying, as he flung open the door between the gunroom where we were sitting and the dining-room where those three had sat, "I would have liked to be there to see! Can't you picture them round that table? And can't you realise the life, the joy, the red blood of the drama they were playing? Pride of race! pride of personal valour! and, for one of them, pride of sex! Two men and a woman standing over their own graves and laughing, because if they kept silence the servants might say afterwards they were afraid! See! that was where he sat, and she opposite him, and the stranger at her left hand! Man, I think I can see them now!"

We stood in that room for a minute, and Forsyth seemed to forget there was more to tell. His glance went round the table, halting at the head and the foot and one side in turns, as though he really saw them sitting there—the strong man who loved, the tiger woman who hated, and the stranger from Spain. And as I watched him, and saw that his eye turned oftenest to the place where Sir Hector had sat, it seemed to me that he was

a true scion of Sir Hector's stock: for pride of race was strong in him, too.

Presently, with a laugh, he gripped my arm and bade me come out and hear the wind. The weather had changed, and a warm western gale was raging. We stood with bare heads at the open door, and heard the sough and moan of it tearing up the glen. Then it seemed to me that somewhere about a mile away two pistol shots snapped out, and the wind that brought the sound to my ears turned for an instant cold. And I shivered, as I had shivered in the afternoon by that sunlit pool.

Colin turned to me with a laugh.

"Did you hear it?" he asked. "Maybe it was only a branch of the big fir at the foot of the glen, snapped by the wind. We'll see in the morning. But at twelve o'clock on that night I've told you of, the two men went out, and they took their pistols with them. There is a round, green bog near the fir-tree, soft and bottomless. Next morning the marks of footsteps were found approaching it from opposite sides, and entering it; and two black holes in the greenness showed where it had swallowed two heavy masses that might have been men. It was said that Sir Hector and the Spaniard fought out their duel to the death there, and that the bog swallowed them where they fell.

"The woman was found in the chair where she had dined. A dagger was in her heart—the dagger she had struck with in the morning. But no witness lived to say which of the three had put it there."

REST.

AGAINST the shoulder of the hill
That brings the azure near,
I rest my head and dream at will,
Earth's beating heart I hear.
Dear Mother Out-of-doors, how still
Thine eyes are, and how clear!

ISABELLA HOWE FISKE.

FROM POLE TO POLE:

AN ACCOUNT OF A JOURNEY THROUGH THE AXIS OF THE EARTH;
COLLATED FROM THE DIARIES OF THE LATE PROFESSOR HAFFKIN
AND HIS NIECE, MRS. ARTHUR PRINCEPS.

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

"WELL, Professor, what is it? Something pretty important, I suppose, from the wording of your note. What is the latest achievement? Have you solved the problem of aerial navigation, or got a glimpse into the realms of the fourth dimension, or what?"

"No, not any of those as yet, my friend, but something that may be quite as wonderful of its sort," replied Professor Haffkin, putting his elbows down on the table and looking keenly across it under his shaggy, iron-grey eyebrows at the young man who was sitting on the opposite side pulling meditatively at a good cigar and sipping a whisky-and-soda.

"Well, if it is something really extraordinary and at the same time practicable—as you know, my ideas of the practicable are fairly wide—I'm there as far as the financial part goes. As regards the scientific end of the business, if you say 'Yes,' it is 'Yes.'"

Mr. Arthur Princeps had very good reasons for thus "going blind" on a project of which he knew nothing save that it probably meant a sort of scientific gamble to the tune of several thousands of pounds. He had had the good fortune to sit under the Professor when he was a student at the Royal School of Mines, and being possessed of that rarest of all gifts, an intuitive imagination, he had seen vast possibilities through the meshes of the verbal network of the Professor's lectures.

Further, the kindly Fates had blessed him with a twofold dowry. He had a keen and insatiable thirst for that kind of knowledge which is satisfied only by the demonstration of hard facts. He was a student of physical science simply because he couldn't help it; and his grandfather had left him ground-rents in London, Birmingham, and Manchester, and coal and iron mines in half-a-dozen counties, which produced an almost preposterous income.

At the same time, he had inherited from his mother and his grandmother that kind

of intellect which enabled him to look upon all this wealth as merely a means to an end.

Later on, Professor Haffkin had been his examiner in Applied Mathematics at London University, and he had done such an astonishing paper that he had come to him after he had taken his D.Sc. degree and asked him in brief but pregnant words for the favour of his personal acquaintance. This had led to an intellectual intimacy which not only proved satisfactory from the social and scientific points of view, but also materialised on many profitable patents.

The Professor was a man rich in ideas, but comparatively poor in money. Arthur Princeps had both ideas and money, and as a result of this conjunction of personalities the man of science had made thousands out of his inventions, while the scientific man of business had made tens of thousands by exploiting them; and that is how matters stood between them on this particular evening when they were dining *tête-à-tête* in the Professor's house in Russell Square.

When dinner was over, the Professor got up and said—

"Bring your cigar up into the study, Mr. Princeps. I want a pipe, and I can talk more comfortably there than here. Besides, I've something to show you."

"All right, Professor; but if you're going to have a pipe, I'll do the same. One can think better with a pipe than a cigar. It takes too much attention."

He tossed the half of his Muria into the grate and followed the Professor up to his sanctum, which was half study, half laboratory, and withal a very comfortable apartment. There was a bright wood-and-coal fire burning in the old-fashioned grate, and on either side of the hearth there was a nice, deep, cosy armchair.

"Now, Mr. Princeps," said the Professor, when they were seated, "I am going to ask you to believe something which I dare say you will think impossible."

"My dear sir, if you think it possible,

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that is quite enough for me," replied Princeps. "What is it?"

The Professor took a long pull at his pipe, and then, turning his head so that his eyes met his guest's, he replied—

"It's a journey through the centre of the earth."

Arthur Princeps bit the amber of his pipe clean through, sat bolt upright, caught the pipe in his hand, spat the pieces of amber into the fireplace, and said—

"I beg your pardon, Professor—through the centre of the earth? That's rather a large order, isn't it? I've just been reading an article in one of the scientific papers which goes to show that the centre of the earth—the kernel of the terrestrial nut, as it were—is a rigid, solid body harder and denser than anything we know on the surface."

"Quite so, quite so," replied the Professor. "I have read the article myself, and I admit that the reasoning is sound as far as it goes; but I don't think it goes quite far enough—I mean far enough back. However, I think I can show you what I mean in a much shorter time than I can tell you."

As he said this, he got up from his chair and went to a little cupboard in a big bureau which stood in a recess beside the fireplace. He took out a glass vessel about six inches in diameter and twelve in height, and placed it gently on a little table which stood between the easy-chairs.

Princeps glanced at it and saw that it was filled with a fluid which looked like water. Exactly half-way between the surface of the fluid and the bottom of the glass there was a spherical globule of a brownish-yellow colour, and about an inch in diameter. As the Professor set the glass on the table, the globule oscillated a little and then came to a rest. Princeps looked at it with a little lift of his eyelids, but said nothing. His host went back to the cupboard and took out a long, thin, steel needle with a little disc of thin white metal fixed about three inches from the end. He lowered it into the fluid in the glass and passed it through the middle of the globule, which broke as the disc passed into it, and then re-shaped itself again in perfectly spherical form about it.

The Professor looked up and said, just as though he were repeating a portion of one of his lectures—

"This is a globule of coloured oil. It floats in a mixture of alcohol and water which is of exactly the same specific gravity as its own. It thus represents as nearly as possible the earth in its former molten condition,

floating in space. The earth had then, as now, a rotary action on its own axis. This needle represents that axis. I give it a rotary motion, and you will see here what happened millions of years ago to the infant planet Terra."

As he said this, he began to twirl the needle swiftly but very steadily between the fore-fingers of his right and left hand. The globule flattened and spread out laterally until it became a ring, with the needle and the disc in the centre of it. Then the twirling slowed down. The ring became a globule again, but it was flattened at either pole, and there was a clearly defined circular hole through it from pole to pole. The Professor deftly withdrew the needle and disc through the opening, and the globule continued to revolve round the hole through its centre.

"That is what I mean," he said. "Of course, I needn't go into detail with you. There is the earth as I believe it to be to-day, with certain exceptions which you will readily see.

"The exterior crust has cooled. Inside that there is probably a semi-fluid sphere, and inside that again, possibly, the rigid body, the core of the earth. But I don't believe that that hole has been filled, simply because it must have been there to begin with. Granted also that the pull of gravitation is towards the centre, still, if there is a void from Pole to Pole, as I hold there must be, as a natural consequence of the centrifugal force generated by the earth's revolution, the mass of the earth would pull equally in all directions away from that void."

"I think I see," said Princeps, upon whom the astounding possibilities of this simple demonstration had been slowly breaking. "I see. Granted a passage like that from Pole to Pole—call it a tunnel—a body falling into it at one end would be drawn towards the centre. It would pass it at a tremendous velocity and be carried towards the other end; but as the attraction of the mass of the earth would be equal on all sides of it, it would take a perfectly direct course—I mean, it wouldn't smash itself to bits against the sides of the tunnel.

"The only difficulty that I see is that, suppose that the body were dropped into the tunnel at the North Pole, it wouldn't quite reach the South Pole. It would stop and turn back, and so it would oscillate like a pendulum with an ever-decreasing swing until it finally came to rest in the middle of the tunnel—or, in other words, the centre of the earth."

"Exactly," said the Professor. "But would it not be possible for means to be taken to propel the projectile beyond the attraction from the centre if those means were employed at the moment when the momentum of the body was being counteracted by the return pull towards the centre?"

"Perfectly feasible," said Princeps, "pro-

You've only got to tell me that you really think it possible, and I'm with you. If you like to undertake the details, you can draw on me up to a hundred thousand; and when you're ready, I'll go with you. Which Pole do you propose to start from?"

"The North Pole," said the Professor, quietly, as though he were uttering the merest commonplace, "although still undiscovered, is getting a little bit hackneyed. I propose that we shall start from the South Pole. It is very good of you to be so generous in the way of finances. Of course, you understand that you cannot hope for any monetary return, and it is also quite possible that we may both lose our lives."

"People who stick at small things never do great ones," replied Princeps. "As for the money, it doesn't matter. I have too much—more than anyone ought to have. Besides, we might find oceans of half-molten gold inside—who knows? Anyhow, when you're ready to start, I am."

II.

NEARLY two months after this conversation had taken place, something else happened. The Professor's niece, the only blood-relation he had in the world, came back from Heidelberg with her degree of Doctor of Philosophy. She was "a daughter of the Gods, divinely tall and most divinely fair," as became one in whose veins ran both the Norse and the Anglo-Saxon blood. Certain former experiences had led Princeps to the opinion that she liked him exceedingly for himself, and disliked him almost as much for his money—a fact which somehow made the possession of millions seem very unprofitable in his eyes.

Brenda Haffkin happened to get back to London the day after everything had been arranged for the most amazing and seemingly impossible expedition that two human beings had ever decided to attempt.

The British Government and the Royal Geographical Society of London were sending out a couple of vessels—one a superannuated whaler, and the other a hopelessly obsolete



"She had looked over the great Ice Wall of the South."

vided always that there were reasonable beings in the said projectile. Well, Professor, I think I understand you now. You believe that there is this tunnel, as we may call it, running through the earth from Pole to Pole, and you want to get to one of the Poles and make a journey through it.

"It's a gorgeous idea, I must confess.

cruiser, which had narrowly escaped experimental bombardment—to the frozen land of Antarctica. A splendid donation to the funds of the expedition had procured a passage in the cruiser for the adventurers and about ten tons of baggage, the ultimate use of which was little dreamt of by any other member of the expedition.

The great secret was broken to Brenda about a week before the starting of the expedition. Her uncle explained the theory of the project to her, and Arthur Princeps added the footnotes, as it were. Whatever she thought of it, she betrayed no sign either of belief or disbelief; but when the Professor had finished, she turned to Princeps and said very quietly, but with a most eloquent glow in those big, grey eyes into which he had often looked so longingly—

"And you are really going on this expedition, Mr. Princeps? You are going to run the risk of probable starvation and more than probable destruction; and, in addition to that, you must be spending a great deal of money to do it—you who have money enough to buy everything that the world can sell you?"

"What the world can sell, Miss Haffkin—or, in other words, what money can buy—has very little value beyond the necessities of life. It is what money cannot buy, what the world has not got to sell, that is really precious. I suppose you know what I mean," he said, putting his hands into his pockets and turning to stare in an unmeaning way out of the window. "But I beg your pardon. I didn't mean to get back on to that old subject, I can assure you."

"And you really are going on this expedition?" she said, with a deliciously direct inconsequence which, in a beautiful Doctor of Philosophy, was quite irresistible.

"Of course I am. Why not? If we find that there really is a tunnel through the earth, and jump in at the South Pole and come out at the North, and take a series of electro-cinematograph photographs of the crust and core of the earth, we shall have done something that no one else has ever thought about. There ought to be some millions in it, too, besides the glory."

"And suppose you don't? Suppose this wonderful vessel of uncle's gets launched into this bottomless pit, and doesn't come out properly at the other end? Suppose your explosive just misses fire at the wrong moment, and when you've nearly reached the North Pole you go back again past the centre, and so on, and so on, until, perhaps,

two or three centuries hence, your vessel comes to rest at the centre with a couple of skeletons inside it—what then?"

"We should take a medicine-chest with us, and I don't suppose we should wait for starvation."

"And so you seriously propose to stake your life and all your splendid prospects in the world on the bare chance of accomplishing an almost impossibly fantastic achievement?"

"That's about what it comes to, I suppose. I don't really see how a man in my position could spend his money and risk his life much better."

There was a little silence after this, and then Brenda said, in a somewhat altered voice—

"If you really are going, I should like to come, too."

"You could only do that, Miss Haffkin, on one condition."

"And that is——?"

"That you say 'Yes' now to a question you said 'No' to nine months ago. You can call it bribery or corruption, or whatever you like; but there it is. On the other hand, as I have quite made up my mind about this expedition, I might as well tell you that if I don't get back, you will hear of something to your advantage by calling on my lawyers."

"I would rather go and work in a shop than do that!" she said. "Still, if you'll let me come with you, I will."

"Then the 'No' is 'Yes'?" he said, taking a half turn towards her and catching hold of her hand.

"Yes," she said, looking him frankly in the eyes. "You see, I didn't think you were in earnest about these things before; but now I see you are, and that makes you very different, you know, although you have such a horrible lot of money. Of course, it was my fault all the time, but still——"

She was in his arms by this time, and the discussion speedily reached a perfectly satisfactory, if partially inarticulate, conclusion.

III.

THE quiet wedding by special licence at St. Martin's, Gower Street, and the voyage from Southampton to Victoria Land, were very much like other weddings and other voyages; but when the whaler *Australia* and His Majesty's cruiser *Beltona* dropped their anchors under the smoke-shadow of Mount Terror, the mysterious cases were opened, and the officers and crew began to have grave suspicions as to the sanity of their passengers.

The cases were brought up on deck with

the aid of the derricks, and then they got unpacked. The ships were lying about a hundred yards off a frozen, sandy beach. Back of this rose a sheer wall of ice about eighteen hundred feet high. On this side lay all that was known of Antarctica. On the other was the Unknown.

The greater part of the luggage was very heavy. Many and wild were the guesses as to what the contents of these cases could possibly be used for at the uttermost ends of the earth.

The Handy Men only saw insanity—or, at least, a hopelessly impracticable kind of method—in the unloading of those strange-looking stores. There were little cylinders of a curiously light metal, with screw-taps on either end of them—about two thousand of them. There were also queer “fitments” which, when they were landed, somehow erected themselves into sledges with cog-wheels alongside them. There were also little balloons, filled out of the taps of the cylinders, which went up attached to big kites of the quadrangular or box form. When the wind was sufficiently strong, and blowing in the right direction towards the Southern Pole, a combination of these kites took up Professor Haffkin and Mr. Arthur Princeps, and then, after a good many protestations, Mrs. Princeps. She, happening to get to the highest elevation, came down and reported that she had seen what no other Northern-born human being had ever seen.

She had looked over the great Ice Wall of the South, and from the summit of it she had seen nothing but an illimitable plain of snow-prairies, here and there broken up by a few masses of ice-mountains, but, so far as she could see, intersected



“It was more like a twelve-hundred mile switchback ride than a Polar expedition.”

by snow-valleys, smooth and hard frozen, stretching away beyond the limit of vision to the South.

"Nothing," she said, "could have been better arranged, even if we had done it ourselves; and there is one thing quite certain—granted that that hole through the earth really exists, there oughtn't to be any difficulty in getting to the edge of it. The wind seems always blowing in the same direction, and with the sledges and the auxiliary balloons we ought to simply race along. It's only a little over twelve hundred miles, isn't it?"

"About that," said the Professor, opening his eyes a little wider than usual. "And now that we have got our stores all landed, and, as far as we can provide, everything that can stand between us and destruction, we may as well say 'Good-bye' to our friends and world. If we ever get back again, it will be *via* the North Pole, after we have accomplished what the sceptics call the impossible."

"But, Brenda, dear, don't you think you had better go back?" said her husband, laying his hands on her shoulders. "Why should you risk your life and all its possibilities in such an adventure as this?"

"If you risk it," she said, "I will. If you don't, I won't. You don't seem to have grasped the fact even yet that you and I are to all intents and purposes the same person. If you go, I go—through danger to death, or to glory such as human beings never won before. You asked me to choose, and that is what I have chosen. I will vanish with you into the Unknown, or I will come out with you at the North Pole in a blaze of glory that will make the *Aurora Borealis* itself look shabby. But whatever happens to you must happen to me as well, and the money in England must just take care of itself until we get back. That is all I have to say at present."

"And I wouldn't like you to hear you say one syllable more. You've said just what I wanted you to say, just what I thought you would say, and that's about good enough for me. We go from South to North through the core of the earth, or stop and be smashed up somewhere midway or elsewhere, but we'll do it together. If the inevitable happens, I will kill you first and then myself. If we get through, you will be, in the eyes of all men, just what I think you are now, and—well, that's about enough said, isn't it?"

"Almost," she said, "except——"

And then, reading what was plainly written in her eyes, he caught her closer to him.

Their lips met and finished the sentence more meaningfully than any words could have done.

"I thought you'd say that," he said afterwards.

"I don't think you'd have asked me to marry you if you hadn't thought it," she said.

"No," he said. "I wouldn't. It seems a bit brutal to say so, but really I wouldn't."

"And if you hadn't asked like that," she said, once more looking him straight in the eyes, "I should have said 'No,' just as I did before."

She looked very tempting as she said this. He pulled her towards him; and as she turned her face up to his, he said—

"Has it ever struck you that there is infinitely more delight to a man in kissing lips which have once said 'No' to him, and then 'Yes,' than those which have only said 'Yes'?"

"What a very mean advantage to take of an unprotected female——"

A kiss ended the uncompleted sentence.

Then she began again—

"And when shall we start?"

"Seven to-morrow morning—that is to say, by our watches, not by the sun. Everything is on shore now, and we shouldn't make it later. I'm going to the Professor to help him up with the fixings, and I suppose you want to go into the tent and see after your domestic business. Good night for the present."

"Good night, dear, for the present."

And so was said the most momentous "Good night" that man and woman had ever said to each other since Adam kissed "Good night" to Eve in Eden.

IV.

THE next day—that is to say, a period of twelve hours later, measured according to the chronometers of the expedition (for the pale sun was only describing a little arc across the northern horizon, not to sink below it for another three months or so)—the members of the Pole to Pole Expedition said "Good-bye" to the companions with whom they had journeyed across the world.

There was a strong, steady breeze blowing directly from the northward. The great box-kites were sent up, six of them in all, and along the fine piano-wire cables which held them, the lighter portions of the stores were sent on carriers driven by smaller kites.

Princeps and Brenda had gone up first in the carrier-slings. The Professor remained

on the beach with the bluejackets from the cruiser, who, with huge delight and no little mystification, were giving a helping hand in the strangest job that even British sailors had ever helped to put through. Their remarks to each other formed a commentary on the expedition as original as it was terse and to the point. It had, however, the disadvantage of being mostly unprintable.

It was twelve hours later when the Professor, having shaken hands all round, a process which came to between three and four hundred handshakes, took his seat in the sling of the last kite and went soaring up over the summit of the ice-wall. A hearty cheer from five hundred throats, and a rolling fire of blank cartridge from the cruiser, reverberated round the walls of everlasting ice which guarded the hitherto unpenetrated solitudes of Antarctica as the sling crossed the top of the wall, and a pull on the tilting-line brought the great kite slowly to the ground.

As the cable slackened, it was released from its moorings on the beach. A little engine, driven by liquid air, hauled it up on a drum. Three tiny figures appeared on the edge of the ice-cliff and waved their last adieus to the ships and the little crowd on the beach. Then they disappeared, and the last link between them and the rest of the world was cut, possibly—and, as every man of the Antarctic Expedition firmly believed, for ever.

The three members of the Pole to Pole Expedition bivouacked that night under a snow-knoll, and after a good twelve hours' sleep they set to work on the preparations for the last stage but one of their marvellous voyage. There were four sledges. One of these formed what might be called the baggage-wagon. It carried the gas-cylinders, the greater part of the provisions, and the vehicle which was to convey the three adventurers from the South Pole to the North through the centre of the earth, provided always that the Professor's theory as to the existence of the transterrestrial tunnel proved to be correct. It was packed in sections, to be put together when the edge of the great hole was reached.

The sledge could be driven by two means. As long as the north-to-south wind held good, it was dragged over the smooth, snow-covered ice and land, which stretched away in an illimitable plain as far as the eye could reach from the top of the ice-wall towards the horizon behind which lay the South Pole and, perhaps, the tunnel. It was also

furnished with a liquid-air engine, which actuated four big, spiked wheels, two in front and two behind. These, when the wind failed, would grip the frozen snow or ice and drive the sledge-runners over it at a maximum speed of twenty miles an hour. The engine could, of course, be used in conjunction with the kites when the wind was light.

The other three sledges were smaller, but similar in construction and means of propulsion. Each had its drawing-kites and liquid-air engine. One carried a reserve of provisions, balloons, and basket-cars, with a dozen gas-cylinders. Another was loaded with the tents and cooking-apparatus, and the third carried the three passengers, with their immediate personal belongings, which, among other oddments, included a spirit-heater and a pair of curling-tongs and hair-wavers.

All the sledges were yoked together, the big one going first. Then came the passenger-car, and then the other two side by side. In case of accidents, there were contrivances which made it possible to cast any of the sledges loose at a moment's notice. The kites, if the wind got too high, could be emptied and brought down by means of tilting-lines.

There was a fine twenty-mile breeze blowing when the kites were sent up after breakfast. The yoked sledges were held by lines attached by pegs driven deeply into the frozen snow. The kites reached an altitude of about a thousand feet, and the sledges began to lift and strain at the mooring-lines as though they were living things. The Professor and Princeps cut all the lines but one before they took their places in the sledge beside Brenda. Then Princeps gave her a knife and said—

"Now start us."

She drew the keen edge backwards and forwards over the tautly stretched line. It parted with a springing jerk, and the next moment the wonderful caravan started forward with a jump which tilted them back into their seats.

The little snow-hills began to slip away behind them. The tracks left by the spring-runners tailed swiftly away into the distance, converging as railway-lines seem to do when you look down a long stretch of them. The keen, cold air bit hard on their flesh and soon forced them to protect their faces with the sealskin masks which let down from their helmets; but just before Brenda let hers down, she took a long breath of the icy air and said—

"Ah! That's just like drinking iced champagne. Isn't this glorious?"

Then she gasped, dropped her mask over her face, put one arm through her husband's and one through her uncle's, pulled them close to her, and from that moment she became all eyes, looking through the crystal plate in her mask at the strange, swiftly moving landscape and the great box-kites, high up in the air, dull white against the dim blue sky, which were dragging them so swiftly and so easily towards the Unknown and, perhaps, towards the impossible.

V.

THE expedition had been travelling for little more than six days, and so far the journey had been quite uneventful. The pale sun had swung six times round its oblique course without any intervention of darkness to break the seemingly end'less polar day. At first they had travelled seventeen hours without halting. None of them could think of sleep amidst such novel surroundings, but the next day they were content with twelve, and this was agreed on as a day's journey.

They soon found that either their good fortune had given them a marvellously easy route, or else that the Antarctic continent was strangely different from the Arctic. Hour after hour their sledges, resting on rubber springs, spun swiftly over the undulating fields of snow-covered ice with scarcely a jog or a jar—in fact, as Brenda said at the end of the journey, it was more like a twelve-hundred mile switchback ride than a polar expedition.

So they travelled and slept and ate. Eight hours for sleep, two hours evening and morning for pitching and striking tents, supper and breakfast, and the stretching of limbs, and twelve hours' travel.

Lunch was eaten *en route*, because the lowering of the kites and the mooring of the sledges were a matter of considerable labour, and they naturally wanted to make the most of the wind while it lasted.

Every day, as the sun reached the highest point of its curved course along the horizon, the Professor took his latitude. Longitude, of course, there was practically none to take, since every day's travel took them so many hundred miles along the converging meridians, and east and west, with every mile they made, came nearer and nearer together.

On the seventh morning the kites were all lowered, taken to pieces, and packed up,

with the exception of one which drew the big sledge.

They had calculated that they were now within about a hundred miles of the Pole—that is to say, the actual end of the earth's axis—and, according to the Professor's calculations (granted that the Pole to Pole tunnel existed) it would be about a hundred miles in diameter. At the same time, it might be a good deal more, and, therefore, it was not considered advisable to approach what would literally be the end of the earth at a speed of twenty miles an hour, driven by the strong, steady breeze which had remained with them from the top of the ice-wall. So the liquid-air engines were set to work, the spiked wheels bit into the hard-frozen snow, and the sledges, following the big one, and helped to a certain extent by its kite, began to move forward at about eight miles an hour.

The landscape did not alter materially as they approached the polar confines. On all sides was a vast plain of ice crossed in a generally southerly direction by long, broad snow-lanes. Here and there were low hills, mostly rounded domes of snow; but these were few and far between, and presented no obstacles to their progress.

A little before lunch-time the ground began to slope suddenly away to the southward to such an extent that the kite was hauled in, and the spiked wheels had to be used to check the increasing speed of the sledges. On either hand the slope extended in a perfectly uniform fashion, and after a descent of about an hour, they could see a vast curved ridge of snow stretching to right and to left behind them which shut out the almost level rays of the pale sun so that the semi-twilight in which they had been travelling was rapidly deepening into dusk.

What was it? Were they descending into a vast polar depression, to the shores of such an open sea as had often been imagined by geographers and explorers, or were they in truth descending towards the edge of the Arctic tunnel itself?

"I wonder which it is?" said Brenda, sipping her midday coffee. "Don't you think we'd better stop soon and do a little snowshoeing? I, for one, should object to beginning the journey by falling over the edge. Ugh! Fancy a fall of seven thousand miles into nowhere! And then falling back again another seven thousand miles, and so for ever and ever, until your flesh crumbled off your bones and at last your skeleton came

to a standstill exactly at the centre of the earth !”

“Not at all a pleasant prospect, I admit, my dear Brenda,” said the Professor : “but, after all, I don’t think you would be hurt much. You see, you would be dead in a very few seconds, and then think of the glory of having the whole world for your tomb.”

“I don’t like the idea,” she replied. “A commonplace crematorium and a crystal urn afterwards will satisfy me completely. But don’t you think we’d better stop and explore ?”

“I certainly think Brenda’s right,” said Princeps. “If the tunnel is there, and the big sledge dragged us over into it—well, we needn’t talk about that. I think we’d better do a little exploring, as she says.”

The sledges were stopped, and the tilting-line of the great kite pulled so as to empty it of wind. It came gently to the earth, and then, rather to their surprise, disappeared completely.

“By Jove !” said Princeps. “I shouldn’t be surprised if the tunnel *is* there, and the kite has fallen in. Brenda, I think it’s just as well you spoke when you did. Fancy tobogganing into a hole like that at ten or fifteen miles an hour !”

“If that is the case,” said the Professor, quietly ignoring the hideous suggestion, “the Axial Tunnel must be rather larger than I expected. I did not expect to arrive at the edge till late this afternoon.”

When the sledges were stopped, they put on their snowshoes and followed the line of the kite-cable for about a mile and a half



“She knelt down on the threshold of the door, and made a sideward slash at the slender rope.”

until they came to the edge of what appeared to be an ice-cliff. The cable hung over this, hanging down into a dusk which quickly deepened into utter darkness. They hauled upon it and found that there were only a few yards over the cliff, and presently they landed the great kite.

"I wonder if it really is the tunnel?" said Brenda, taking a step forward.

"Whatever it is, it's too deep for you to fall into with any comfort," said her husband, dragging her back almost roughly.

Almost at the same moment a mass of ice and snow on which they had been standing a few minutes before, hauling up the cable of the kite, broke away and disappeared into the void. They listened with all their ears, but no sound came back. The huge block had vanished in silence into nothingness, into a void which apparently had no bottom; for even if it had fallen a thousand feet, an echo would have come back to them up the wall.

"It is the tunnel," said Brenda, after a few moments' silence, during which they looked at each other with something like awe in their eyes. "Thank you, Arthur, I don't think I should have liked to have gone down, too. But, uncle," she went on, "if this is the tunnel, and that thing has gone on before us, won't it stop and come back when it gets near the North Pole? Suppose we were to meet it after we have passed the the centre. A collision just there wouldn't be very pleasant, would it?"

"My dear Brenda," he replied, "there is really no fear of anything of that sort. You see, there is atmosphere in the tunnel, and long before it reaches the centre, friction will have melted the ice and dissipated the water into vapour."

"Of course. How silly of me not to have thought of that before! I suppose a piece of iron thrown over there would be melted to vapour, just as the meteorites are. Well now, If we've found the tunnel, hadn't we better go back and get ready to go through it?"

"We shall have to wait for the moon, I suppose," said Princeps, as they turned away towards the sledges.

"Yes," said the Professor. "We shall have plenty of moonlight to work by in about fifty-six hours. Meanwhile we can take a rest and do as Brenda says."

It was just fifty hours later when the moon, almost at the full, rose over the eastern edge of the snow-wall, casting a flood of white light over the dim, ghostly land of the World's End. As it rose higher and higher, they saw that the sloping plain ended in a vast

semicircle of cliff, beyond which there was nothing. They went down towards it and looked beyond and across, but the curving ice-walls reached away on either hand until they were lost in the distance. They were standing literally on the end of the earth. No sound of water or of volcanic action came up out of the void. They brought down a couple of rockets and fired them from the edge at a downward angle of sixty degrees. The trail of sparks spread out with inconceivable rapidity, and then, when the rockets burst, two tiny blue stars shone out, apparently as far below them as the stars of heaven were above them.

"I don't think there's very much doubt about that," said the Professor. "We have found the Axial Tunnel: but, after all, if it is only a very deep depression, our balloons can take us out of it after we have touched the bottom. Still, personally, I believe it to be the tunnel."

"Oh, it must be!" said Brenda decisively. And so, in fact, it proved to be.

As the moon grew rounder and brighter, the work of preparation for the last stage of their amazing enterprise grew apace. Everything had, of course, been thought out to the minutest detail, and the transformation which came over their impedimenta was little short of magical.

The sledges dissolved into their component parts, and these came together again in the form of a big, conical, drum-like structure, with walls of thick *papier mâché*. It had four long plate-glass windows in the sides and a large round one top and bottom. It was ten feet in diameter and fifteen in height. The interior was plainly but snugly fitted up as a sitting-room by day and, by means of a movable partition, a couple of sleeping-berths by night.

The food and water were stowed away in cupboards and tanks underneath the seats, and the gas-cylinders, rockets, etc., were packed under the flooring, which had a round trap-door in the centre over the window.

The liquid air-engines and the driving apparatus of the sledges were strongly secured to the lower end with chains which, in case of emergency, could be easily released by means of slip-hooks operated from inside. There were also two hundred pounds of shot-ballast underneath the flooring.

Attached to the upper part of the structure were four balloons, capable at their full capacity of easily lifting it with its whole load on board. These were connected by tubes with the interior, and thus, by means

of pumps worked by a small liquid-air engine, the gas from the cylinders could either be driven up into them or drawn down and re-stored. In the centre of the roof was another cable, longer than those which held the balloons, and to this was attached a large parachute which could be opened or shut at will from inside.

VI.

WHEN the moment chosen for departure came, there remained no possible doubt as to the correctness of the Professor's hypothesis. The sun was dipping below the horizon and the long polar night was beginning. The full moon shone down from the zenith through a cloudless, mistless atmosphere. The sloping snow-field and the curved edge of the Axial Tunnel were brilliantly illuminated. They could see for miles along the ice-cliffs, far enough to make certain that they were part of a circle so vast that anything like an exact calculation of its circumference was impossible.

The breeze was still straight to the southward, to the centre of the tunnel. The balloons were inflated until the *Brenda*—as the strange vehicle had been named by a majority of two to one—began to pull at the ropes which held her down. Then, with a last look round at the inhospitable land they were leaving—perchance never to see land of any sort again—they went in through the curved sliding door to windward. Princeps started the engine, the balloons began to fill out, and three of the four mooring-ropes were cast off as the *Brenda* began to rock and swing like the car of a captive balloon.

"Once more," said Princeps, giving his wife the knife with which she had cut the sledges loose.

"And this time for good—or the North Pole—or—well, at any rate, this is the stroke of Fate."

She gave her left hand to her husband, knelt down on the threshold of the door, and made a sideward slash at the slender rope which was fastened just under it. The strands ripped and parted, the *Brenda* rocked twice or thrice and became motionless. The ice-cliffs slipped away from under them, the vast, unfathomed, and fathomless gulf spread out beneath them, and the voyage, either from Pole to Pole or from Time to Eternity, had begun.

The Professor, who was naturally in command, allowed the *Brenda* to drift for two and a half hours at a carefully calculated

wind-speed of twenty miles an hour. Then he said to Princeps—

"You can deflate the balloons now, I think. We must be near the centre. I will see to the parachute."

They had been thinking and talking of this journey, with all its apparent impossibilities and terrific risks, until they had become almost commonplace to them. But for all that, they looked at each other as they had never done before, as the Professor gave the fateful order. Even his lips tightened and his brows came together a little as he turned to cast loose the fine wire cables which held the ribs of the parachute.

The powerful little engine got to work, and the gas from the balloons hissed back into the cylinders. Then the envelopes were hauled in and stowed away. Through the side windows, Brenda saw a dim, far-away horizon rise up all round, and through the top window and the circular hole in the parachute, she saw the full disc of the moon growing smaller and smaller, and so she knew that they had begun their fall of 41,708,711 feet.

Taking this at 7,000 miles, in round numbers, the Professor, reckoning on an average speed of fifty to sixty miles an hour, expected to make the passage from Pole to Pole in about six days, granted always that the tunnel was clear all through. If it wasn't, their fates were on the knees of the Gods, and there was nothing more to say. As events proved, they made it in a good deal less.

For the first thirty-six hours everything went with perfect smoothness. The wind-gauges at each side showed a speed of fifty-one miles an hour, and the *Brenda* continued her fall with perfect steadiness.

Suddenly, just as they were about to say "Good night" for the second time, they heard a sharp snapping and rending sound break through the smooth swish of the air past the outer wall of their vehicle. The next instant it rocked violently from side to side, and the indicators of the gauges began to fly round into invisibility.

"Heavens, uncle! what has happened?" gasped Brenda, clinging to the seat into which she had been slung.

"It can only be one thing," replied the Professor, steadying himself against the opposite wall. "Some of the stays have given way, and the parachute has split or broken up. God forgive me! Why did I not think of that before?"

"Of what?" said Princeps, dropping into

the seat beside Brenda and putting his arm round her.

"The increasing pull of gravitation as we get nearer to the earth's centre. I calculated for a uniform pull only. They must have been bearing a tremendous strain before they parted."

While he was speaking, the vehicle had become steady again. The wind-gauges whirled till the spindles screeched and smoked in their sockets. The rush of the wind past the outside wall deepened to a roar and then rose to a shrill, whistling scream.

Long, uncounted minutes of sheer speechless, thoughtless terror passed. The inside air grew hot and stifling. Even the inflammable walls began to crinkle and crack under the fearful heat developed by the friction of the rushing air.

Brenda gasped two or three times for breath, and then, slipping out of her husband's arms, fell fainting in a heap on the floor. Mechanically both he and the Professor stooped to lift her up. To their amazement, the effort they made to do so threw her unconscious form nearly to the top of the conical roof. She floated in mid-air for a moment and then sank gently back into their arms.

"The Centre of the Earth!" gasped the Professor. "The point of equal attraction! If we can breathe for the next hour, we have a chance. Quick, Arthur, give us more air! The evaporation will reduce the temperature."

Even in such an awful moment as this, Professor Haffkin could not quite forget his scientific phraseology.

He laid Brenda, still weighing only a few pounds, on one of the seats and went to the liqueur-case for some brandy. Princeps meanwhile turned the tap of a spare cylinder lying beside the air-engine which drove the little electric-light installation. The sudden conversion of the liquid atmosphere into the gaseous form brought the temperature down with a rush, and—as they thought afterwards, with a shudder—probably prevented all the cylinders from exploding.

The brandy and the sudden coolness immediately revived Brenda, and after the two men had taken a stiff glass to steady their shaken-up nerves, they sat down and began to consider their position as calmly as might be.

They had passed the centre of the earth at an enormous but unknown velocity, and they were, therefore, endowed with a momentum which would certainly carry them far towards

the northern end of the Axial Tunnel; but how far, it was impossible to say, since they did not know their speed.

But, however great the speed, it was diminishing every second, and a time must come when it would be *nil*—and then the backward fall would begin. If they could not prevent this, they might as well put an end to everything at once.

Hours passed; uncounted, but in hard thinking, mingled with dumb apprehension. The rush of the wind outside began to slacken at last, and when Princeps at length managed to fit another wind-gauge in place of the one that had been smashed to atoms, it registered a little over two hundred miles an hour.

"Our only chance, as far as I can see," said the Professor at length, looking up from a writing-pad on which he had been making pages of calculations, "is this. We must watch that indicator; and when the speed drops, say, to ten miles an hour, we must inflate our balloons to the utmost, cut loose the engines and other gear, and trust to the gas to pull us out."

There was literally nothing else to be done, and so for the present they sat and watched the indicator, and, by the way of killing the weary hours, counted the possibilities and probabilities of their return to the civilised world should the *Brenda's* balloons succeed in lifting her out of the northern end of the Axial Tunnel.

Hour by hour the speed dropped. The fatal pull, which, unless the balloons were able to counteract it, would drag them back with a hand resistless as that of Fate itself, had got them in its grip. Somewhere, an unknown number of miles above them, were the solitudes of the Northern Pole, from which they might not get away even if they reached them. Below was the awful gulf through which they had already passed, and to fall back into that meant a fate so terrible that Brenda had already made her husband promise to shoot her, should the balloons fail to do their work.

The Professor passed most of his time in elaborate calculations, the object of which was the ascertaining, as nearly as possible, their distance from the centre of the earth, and, therefore, the number of miles which they would have to rise to reach the outer air again. There were other calculations which had relation to the lifting power of the balloons, the weight of the car and its occupants, and the amount of gas at their disposal, not only for the ascent to the Pole,



"He hung for a moment to the edge with his hands, and let go."

but also for their flight southward, if happily they found favourable winds to carry them back to the confines of civilisation. These he kept to himself. He had the best of reasons for doing so.

The hours went by, and the speed shown by the indicator dropped steadily. A hundred miles an hour had become fifty, fifty became forty, then thirty, twenty, ten.

"I think you can get your balloons out now, Arthur," said the Professor. "It's a

very good thing we housed them in time, or they would have been torn to ribbons by this. If you'll cast them loose, I'll see to the gas apparatus. Meanwhile, Brenda, you may as well get dinner ready."

Within an hour the four balloons were cast loose through their portholes in the roof of the car and attached to their cables and supply pipes. Meanwhile the upward speed of the *Brenda* had dropped from

ten to seven miles. The gas-cylinders were connected with the transmitters and apparatus which allowed the gas to return to a normal temperature before passing into the envelopes, and then the balloons began to fill.

For a few moments the indicator stopped and trembled as the cables tightened, then it went forward again. They saw that it was registering six and a half miles an hour. This rose to seven, eight, and nine. Presently it passed ten.

"We shall do it, after all," said Princeps. "You see, we're going faster every minute. I wonder what the reason of that check was?"

"Probably the increased atmospheric friction on the surface of the balloons," replied the Professor quietly, with his eyes fixed on the dial.

The indicator stopped again at ten, and then the little blue, steel hand, which to them was veritably the Hand of Fate, began to creep slowly backwards.

None of them spoke. They all knew what it meant. The upward pull of the balloons was not counteracting the downward pull exerted from the centre of the earth. In a few hours more they would come to a standstill, and then, when the two forces balanced, they would hang motionless in that awful gulf of everlasting night until the gas gave out, and then the backward plunge to perdition would begin.

"I don't like the look of that," said Princeps, keeping his voice as steady as he could. "Hadn't we better let the engines go?"

"I think we ought to throw away everything that we can do without," said Brenda, staring at the fateful dial with fixed, wide-open eyes. "What's the use of anything

if we never get to the top of this horrible hole?"

"That's rather a disrespectful way in which to speak of the Axial Tunnel of the earth, Brenda," said the Professor, with the flicker of a smile. "But we won't get rid of the impedimenta just yet," he went on. "You see, as the mathematicians say, velocity is momentum multiplied into mass. Therefore, if we decrease our mass, we shall decrease our momentum. The engines and the other things are really helping us along now, though it doesn't seem so. When the indicator has nearly stopped, it will be time to cut the weight loose."

Then they had dinner, eaten with a mere pretence of appetite, assisted by a bottle of "Pol Roger '89." The speed continued to drop steadily during the night, though Princeps satisfied himself that the balloons were filled to the utmost limit consistent with safety, and at last, towards the middle of the conventional night, it hovered between one and zero.

"I think you may let the engines go now, Arthur," said the Professor, "It's quite evident that we're overweighted. Slip the hooks, and then go up and see if your balloons will stand any more."

He said this in a whisper, because Brenda, utterly worn out, had gone to lie down behind the partition.

The hooks were slipped, and the hand on the dial began to move again as the *Brenda*, released from about six hundred pounds' weight, began to ascend again. But the speed only rose to fifteen miles an hour, and that was eight miles short of the result the Professor had arrived at. The attractive force was evidently being exerted from the sides of the tunnel as well as from the centre of the earth. He looked at the dial and said to Princeps—

"I think you'd better go and lie down now. It's my watch on deck. We're doing nicely now. I want to run through my figures again."

"All right," said Princeps, yawning and shaking hands. "You'll call me in four hours, as usual, won't you?"

Professor Haffkin nodded and said: "Good

night. I hope we shall be through our difficulties by the morning. Good night, Arthur."

He got out his papers again and once more went minutely through the maze of figures and formulæ with which the sheets were covered. Then, when the sound of slow, deep breathing told him that Princeps was asleep, he opened the trap-door in the floor and counted the unexhausted cylinders of gas. When he had finished, he said to himself in a whisper—

"Barely enough to get them home, even with the best of luck; but still enough to prove that it is possible to make a journey through the centre of the earth from Pole to Pole. At least, that will be done and proved—and Karl Haffkin will live for ever."

There was the light of martyrdom in his eyes as he looked for the last time at the dial. Then he unscrewed the circular window from the bottom of the car, lowered himself through it, hung for a moment to the edge with his hands, and let go.

* * * * *

When Princeps and Brenda woke after several hours' sleep, they were astonished to find the windows of the car glowing with a strange, brilliant light—the light of the Northern Aurora. Princeps got out, saying: "Hurrah, Professor! we've got there! Daylight at last!"

But there was no Professor, and only the open trap-door and the window hanging on its hinges below told how an almost priceless life had been heroically sacrificed to make the way of life longer for two who had only just begun to tread it together through the golden gates of the Garden of Love.

But Karl Haffkin's martyrdom meant even more than this. Without it, the great experiment must have failed, and three lives would have been lost instead of one; and so he chose to die the lesser death so that his comrades on that marvellous voyage might live out their own lives to Nature's limit, and that he himself might live for ever on the roll of honour which is emblazoned with the names of the noblest of all martyrs—those who have given their lives to prove that Truth is true.



THE NEW PEGASUS.

By CAROLYN WELLS.

A POET, if major or minor,
 Who lived in the earlier days,
 Though he were a penny-a-liner,
 Or a bard who wrote lyrics and lays,
 Whenever he felt inspiration
 To seek the Pierian fount,
 Would shyly and with trepidation
 His Pegasus mount.

'Twas a scholarly, sage band of brothers
 Who rode on the classic old steed;
 Yet some advanced more than the others
 By urging the beast to top speed.
 Will Shakespeare and Milton and Dryden
 Were always seen far in the van,
 While Browning like fury was ridin',
 And Pope also ran.



THE WHITE MARBLE SPHINX.

By ROSAMUND MARRIOTT WATSON.*



It was summer-time in the Little Boy's garden, and they were all busy shelling peas on the broad lower lawn, under the shadow of the big may-tree. The midday sun was shining on the smooth grass and the flower-beds full of red and white roses; and which sounded the sweeter, the soft, rippling whisper of the fountain, or the blue-tit's odd little song as he flitted in and out between the cherry-tree boughs, it would have been difficult to tell. They were all very busy; that is to say, the Little Boy and his Mother were scooping the pearly green peas out of their pods and dropping them with a little, rattling sound into a big, blue-and-white bowl; while Tony, the Little Boy's small, smooth, white dog, and Toutou, his large, black, fluffy cat, and Francis, his friend, and the Sphinx, were busy watching them. They had not been speaking for at least two minutes when the Little Boy said: "I can't make out what other thing it is he says, Mummy. First he says: 'Yes—it—is, yes—it—is, yes—it—is,' just as though someone we can't hear was keeping on contradicting him; but the other bit is longer. There, he's singing it again!"

"It sounds very like something that is true sometimes, just now and then, about you," said his Mother, smiling in rather a funny way; "but that isn't true to-day."

"I know what it is," broke in Francis; "it's '*Naughty Dickie, Naughty Dickie, Naughty Dickie!*' and I suppose that's what they mean by 'tell-tale-tit.'"

"However did you guess?" asked the Little Boy. "But he's wrong to-day, anyhow, for I haven't been the least littlest bit bad ever since I woke up this morning; have I, Mummy?"

"No, dear, not the very least; you've been as good, and almost as quiet, as the Sphinx all the morning."

"Oh!" groaned Francis, rolling over on to his back among the daisies, "I only wish I felt half as cool as the Sphinx looks: even here in the shade it's hot—it's hot everywhere." It certainly was hot; so hot that the families of dingy brown sparrows who were busily taking their midday bath all round the rim of the fountain could talk of nothing else. And the white marble Sphinx did look beautifully cool, sitting so calm and still under the may-tree, with its great wings that looked, to the Little Boy, always ready to take flight, as if it might spread them at any moment and sail off into the sky. He would not, he thought, feel in the least surprised if it did. It sat there always with that wise, quiet smile on its beautiful face, looking as if it knew all about everything in the world, and felt rather pleased with it on the whole. "It could tell me all sorts of wonderful things, I am sure, if it liked," he said to himself, as he softly popped the last shining green pod between thumb and finger; but he did not say this out loud, because he never told other children his thoughts about the Sphinx, for fear they should laugh and think him silly.

He carried the big, blue-and-white bowl over the sunny lawn and gave it to Cook through the kitchen window, and Cook said: "Thank you, Master Dickie. What a useful boy you do get! Whatever we should do without your help, I'm sure I don't know!" And when he got back to the may-tree and plumped down on the cool grass again, he found that Francis had moved his place and was sitting in front of the Sphinx.

"Whatever has it got round its neck?" he was asking, "and whatever for? Whoever can have been goose enough to go putting a wreath on a silly stone image?"

The Little Boy turned rather red, but he did not say anything, only as he looked at the marble face he could have declared that it smiled at him. Just for the tiniest part of a second it seemed—no more; or perhaps it might only have been a twinkle of sunlight falling between the thick hawthorn boughs as a blackbird flew clucking out and dashed across his garden into the next.

The Little Boy's Mother looked up and smiled very much the same kind smile as

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the Sphinx. "Dick has always been very fond of it," she said. "When he was quite a tiny baby, we used to wheel him out here in his perambulator and let him sleep beside it

Sphinx is really an old friend, and must not be made fun of!"

And the next minute the two boys had raced off to the fountain to look at the

one gold-fish who wouldn't turn golden like the rest, but obstinately remained a dull purple with two white spots, which, of course, was a serious matter; and even Francis could not think what had better be done. "A boy I know," he said sternly, "used to give his the yellow gelatine off crackers when he had any; but I don't remember if it did them any good."

The shadows were long upon the lawn, and the sun was low when the Little Boy came down the garden to the may-tree again.

Francis's Fräulein had taken him home some time since, and the Little Boy felt just comfortably tired with the pleasant, long day of play. He was

rather pleased, too, with some new inven-

tions they had hit upon

between them, and especially

with one an idea strictly of

his own—about making a little

summer-house in the orchard-garden

for his dormice, with a wee flower-bed

and a fountain with real water in front,

and perhaps a real radish-plot behind it.

He would soon have to go in, he knew,

for it was getting near bedtime; but the

evening air was so soft and cool, and the

thrush was singing such a sweet "Good

night" from the very topmost bough of

the towering green pagoda of the deodar,

that he felt happy all through and just as

good as gold. The roses in the garland that

hung about the Sphinx's neck were drooping

now, and the great, white wings behind the



"Was it you that spoke?"

in the shade; and later on, when he used to crawl about on rugs and cushions, he seemed to like being here best. Yes, and the very first time he ever stood upright of his own accord, he pulled himself up by its left wing and said something most triumphantly in his own language. So you see, Francis, the

beautiful head glimmered strangely in the dim, blue twilight, almost as though they were moving, he thought. It was altogether too peaceful and pleasant to go in, even to the comfortable night-nursery and the smooth, white bed. "Mummy and Daddy are going out to dinner to-night," he remembered; "and I expect Emma is helping her to dress, and will come to call me in when she wants me." So he loitered to and fro and sang to himself as he went. He sang out of sheer contentment, without much thought of either the words or the tune, in much the same way as the thrush sings just before going to sleep. The words were out of a little song his Mother had made for him a few days ago, and went something like this—

O, when I was a little child, I had
a golden tree,
With golden boughs and blossoms overhead;
And there were golden chimneys
to my house that used to be,
And a sound of golden wings
about my bed.

And the tune was a very pretty one.

"What is that you are singing?" said a low, clear voice just behind him. "It sounds sweetly . . . it reminds me——"

The Little Boy took both his hands out of his pockets and stared round him in bewilderment. It certainly was not Emma's voice; and, besides, Emma was nowhere to be seen. There was a yellow light in Mummy's bedroom window, and every now and then a dark figure would flit across the orange-coloured square of it; but there was no one at all on the lawn but himself and—yes—there was the Sphinx. The sun was quite gone now, and the early stars were coming out one by one.

"Was it you that spoke?" said the Little Boy; and now he felt sure, for the Sphinx smiled at him through the soft starlight—there could be no possible mistake about it

this time—and slightly bent its head towards him. "But why have you never spoken to me before?" he asked.

"Why have you never stayed out here after sunset before on this day of the year?" replied the same quiet voice.

"I don't know," he said, still a little bewildered. "I suppose Mummy didn't allow me to. And what do you mean by this day



"Oh, Master Dickie! what a turn you have given me!"

of the year? and how did you come alive? I've often and often wanted to tell you things, but I was afraid it wouldn't be any use——"

"Well, you can tell me anything you like now," said the Sphinx. "And how comes it

that you do not know what day this is? Can you truly be so ignorant as not to know that this is what some people call Old Midsummer Eve, and others St. John's Eve? It had another name in days gone by, but that you would not understand. Why, it is the most important time in all the year—the one evening when I and many others of my kind are able to speak and move and live, and are free to go where we will. If you were to go into the drawing-room now, you would not find the white stone lady (as I have heard you call her) on her pedestal in the corner by the window; and—look over at the fountain—where is the cherub with the fish's tail (as you call him)? Can you see him?"

The Little Boy rubbed his eyes and peered through the gathering dusk. "N-no," he said after a pause. "I can't exactly make him out; but it's getting rather dark, you know, now. How I wish I didn't have to go to bed! Emma is sure to be here in a minute, and I did so want to stay and talk to you."

"Look out of your window before you jump into bed," said the Sphinx. "The stars will be giving plenty of light by then; and see if you can make *me* out here."

Its smile was more mysteriously sweet than ever as it spoke, and its wide wings rustled softly, as though it were going to spread them.

"Oh, don't fly away!" cried the child, so dolefully that the Sphinx looked almost sorry. "Oh! where are you going? and what for? and will you perhaps never come back again?"

"Hush, hush!" said the winged, white creature—and this time it seemed to smile in quite a kind, comforting sort of way—"they are calling you from the house. Don't you hear them? Go now, or they will be displeased; and perhaps—perhaps—who knows?—you may see me presently." And not a word more would it say.

Sure enough, they were calling him from the house; and as he turned slowly to go in, he could catch the whitish glimmer of Emma's apron far down the gravel walk. He must certainly hurry; she was actually coming to look for him, although he knew how she never could bear the garden at any time, and especially when it was dark.

"I'm coming, Emma," he called. "You need not come to fetch me."

"Oh, Master Dickie!" she said, as they went up the steps into the house, "what a turn you have given me, to be sure! I

thought you were safe in the study with your new picture-book; and when I went to look and found you gone—well, there! I called Cook and Emily; and Cook said there never was no telling what you'd be up to next; and Emily, she said there was some horridlike-looking gipsy women selling bootlaces and tapes and pins come round to the back door about tea-time, and did I think they could have run off with you for your clothes? And I'm all of a tremble still. However you could have stayed out so late in that nasty, dark garden, with all them great, ugly bushes and trees all round you, is more than I can tell; but anything for a bit of mischief, I suppose."

They were upstairs in the nursery by this time, and Emma stopped for want of breath, for she had been talking very fast, as she did sometimes when she got excited.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't mean to frighten you, Emma. And don't you remember you said I could stay out there a little longer, as it was so warm?"

"Well, well, let's hear no more about it," said Emma quite nicely; "but you can't have your bath to-night now—Cook's let the fire out, and there's no hot water. I'll just wash your face and hands, and brush your hair, and you must tumble into bed double quick. It's goodness knows what's o'clock already, you young Turk!"

The Little Boy never could quite remember whether he had just dozed off to sleep for a little while or not. But he thought not; in fact, he was almost sure about it when he came to think of it afterwards, for it seemed to him that no sooner had Emma bidden him "Good night, and be a good boy and go to sleep at once," and taken away the candle, than he began to notice how very brightly the full moon was shining into the room—so brightly, indeed, that he lifted his head from his pillow to look. And while he was looking, and wondering half drowsily at the golden light of it, he saw something that made him feel wide awake in an instant. He was out of bed the next moment, with both casements thrown wide open—for the latch was quite an easy one—looking out eagerly into the moonlit garden. Just outside his window there grew a tall, dark pine-tree, and it was between the thick plumes of this that he had thought to see a flutter of great white wings and to hear the wind of them. And again he was not mistaken; for as he watched and wondered, kneeling on the wide window-seat in his little, white nightgown, the great,

white Sphinx wheeled slowly through the moonlight with wings outspread, and hovered outside above the nursery window-sill with its scented garland of pale, clambering roses. Its face looked radiant with happiness, and the drooping garland round its neck, which the child had made and hung there early that morning, was as fresh and dewy as when he had gathered the flowers.

"You see, I have kept my promise," it said; "and now I must leave you—I have far to go."

"Do tell me where, dear Sphinx!" cried the child wistfully. "I do wish you were not going, but would stay and talk to me instead. You can't *think* how dull it is to be in bed when you don't want to be asleep, and they won't let you get up."

"No," said the Sphinx thoughtfully; "I don't think I can. But are you not sleepy?"

"Not a bit?"

"Well——"

"Oh, what? Mummy nearly always is thinking of some pleasant kind of plan when she says 'Well,' like that!"

"I was only considering," said the Sphinx slowly, as it crouched on the broad sill, fanning its wings gently in the still air—"I was thinking whether you would like to go with me to-night. In a very few years you will be too old for me to take you; and there might not be such another chance for you as this."

"Oh, could you really, really take me with you? Could you, could you?" cried the Little Boy, bouncing up and down on the cushions with excitement.

"Be careful," replied the Sphinx, turning about as it spoke. "Don't leave go of the casement-frame until you are safely settled between my wings, and take a firm hold of the chaplet of roses round my neck. Then you will be quite safe. Now we are going to start——"

And suddenly they were sailing smoothly, but more swiftly than the child had ever been carried before, even in trains, through the warm blue and golden summer night—blue with the deep skies and golden with the broad, round moon. The strong pinions beat the air so fast that they scarcely seemed to move in their steady flight, and the child was so happy and so comfortable that he did not feel in the least afraid, although they were so far above the earth that the cities below as they flew looked no bigger than those little towns and dwelling-places that you build with your blocks. The Sphinx's back was just like white velvet to lean

against; and once when the wing-feathers accidentally brushed his face, the Little Boy was reminded of a soft, fluffy boa his Mother used to sometimes wear. On and on they sailed, and always with the same steadfast swiftness; and sometimes there would seem to be land and mountains and rivers far down beneath them, and sometimes the restless sea.

"Where are we going?" said the Little Boy, speaking for the first time since they had started.

"We are there," the Sphinx answered. "Hold fast!"

And down, down, down they sank, slowly and still more slowly, until they alighted with a soft shock on a great, grassy space that seemed to be upon a hillside, and was thickly grown with the strangest, loveliest flowers the child had ever seen, while some of the trees seemed made—leaves, stems, and all—of the purest silver, and others stood all starred with scented, white blossom, and hung with golden globes of fruit.

The child sat upon the sweetly smelling grass and looked about him in silence. Gradually, as his eyes grew more used to see through the blue night and the golden light of the moon, he could make out the wide sweep of a bay and a quiet sea lapping along the shores of it; and then looking behind him, the oddest city, he thought, that could ever have been. Narrow marble streets, and marble houses with courtyards and sparkling fountains, and white terraces, and glowing pictures painted on the walls. It certainly was the most wonderful place in the world. There did not seem to be any staircases to the houses, and very few roofs; but it was lovely all the same, he said in his heart, as he turned to the Sphinx, and was just going to say so out loud, but—"Hush!" it whispered. "Listen and look, for this is what you can never see again."

And suddenly, to sweet, wild music, blown on pipes and reeds, came flocking a troop of creatures as strange as the place itself. Beautiful ladies all in floating white, and decked with clustering, trailing garlands; little, naked, winged baby boys, some with bows and arrows and quivers, and others with torches; young men with short, curly, golden hair, and leopard-skins about their shoulders, older men with ivy-wreaths about their brows, and hairy, goatlike legs and hoofs—all these, and many more that he could never rightly remember, came dancing as lightly as fairies or fireflies over the flowery sward. Now drifting apart, now



"On and on they sailed."

clustering all together, like snowflakes in the beginning of a long fall, they came and went, mingling and separating till the child could scarcely tell one being from another; but all at once it broke upon him that there was one there that he surely knew—the white,

stone lady from his Mother's drawing-room who stood always in the corner near the window. He glanced at his companion, who nodded and smiled, and then—just as suddenly as it had begun—the strange dance ended and the figures vanished from the slope. The

Sphinx sighed deeply. "We must be gone," it said. "Climb upon my back between my wings and hold fast to the rope of roses." And as the child, half in a dream, unwillingly obeyed, it sighed again more heavily still and rose slowly into the brightening heavens.

"I never could have thought of anything so beautiful. But why are you so sad? Are you very tired? And am I too heavy?" asked the Little Boy after a long silence.

"That is my country," said the Sphinx—"my own home, where I lived always under the blue skies and the sunshine until the old lord saw me and had me carried to his ship and brought over the sea."

"What lord? And how unkind of him!" said the child. "Who was he?"

"They said he was a brave sailor, and fought well for his country; but I know nothing of that. He had a white palace with pillars not far from where your house is now, and he put me in the garden of it under an ilex-tree; but the ilex died one cold winter, and then they planted the may-tree instead. I was sorry when the ilex died. And then, one day, the old lord himself died, and they pulled down his palace and made the old, big garden into many new, small ones."

"But ours isn't small," said the child. "Everyone who comes says to Mummy: 'How fortunate you are to have such a large garden so near London!' And she says: 'Yes, I think we are.'"

"Don't talk any more: I have to hurry," said the Sphinx suddenly. "I had no idea

the time had gone so fast. If the sun were to rise——" And it flew faster than ever, so fast that its little rider had to shut his eyes and hold on without thinking of anything else. But at last—"Swish! whirred the great wings—and there were the dark pine-trees with their waving fingers, and the Little Boy's nursery window, wide open, just as he had left it.

"We are only just in time," he heard the Sphinx saying in his ear. "Climb in quickly, for I have but one half-second to get back to my pedestal on the lawn."

And after that he must have fallen asleep very quickly indeed, for the next thing he heard was Mummy's voice, and she was saying: "Oh, Dickie, how bad of you to be sleeping on the window-seat, with the casements open! Tell me how it happened, dear?"

The morning sun was shining in his eyes so brightly that it made him blink, and he felt very, very drowsy; but he jumped up briskly and stretched his little body and, after a big yawn or two, managed to tell her all about it. "So you see, Mummy, darling," said he in conclusion, "Francis really was all wrong in what he said about our Sphinx being silly. But perhaps he would only laugh even if I told him. I don't think I shall tell him—would you?"

He was sitting on his Mother's knee, and her arm was round him, and she just gave him the kind of gentle little hug that he liked so much as she answered: "No, dearie, I don't think I should tell Francis. He mightn't understand."

LOVE'S PARTING.

GO—for we go together . . . where you are
 There must I be, being yours beyond control . . .
 All have I given you, heart and thought and soul,
 And asked one recompense—to be no bar
 Across your path of life, nor ever mar
 Your strange free genius, rounded, strong, and whole.
 For you the larger life, the farther goal.
 The great world-striving . . . Let me watch afar
 And love, and serve, and wait . . . and keep always
 The feeling of your presence, there as here.
 For all the bitter distance of earth's ways
 Is nothing, from that Heaven where without fear
 Our souls have met and spoken, these last days.
 Now . . . go . . . for love itself goes with you, dear.

CURTIS HIDDEN PAGE.

THE SOUL OF NICHOLAS SNYDERS,

THE MISER OF ZANDAM.

By JEROME K. JEROME.*



ONCE upon a time in Zandam, which is by the Zuider Zee, there lived a wicked man named Nicholas Snyders. He was mean and hard and cruel, and loved but one thing in the world, and that was gold.

And even that not for its own sake. He loved the power gold gave him—the power to tyrannise and to oppress, the power to cause suffering at his will. They said he had no soul, but there they were wrong. All men own—or, to speak more correctly, are owned by—a soul; and the soul of Nicholas Snyders was an evil soul. He lived in the old windmill which still is standing on the quay, with only little Christina to wait upon him and keep house for him. Christina was an orphan whose parents had died in debt. Nicholas, to Christina's everlasting gratitude, had cleared their memory—it cost but a few hundred florins—in consideration that Christina should work for him without wages. Christina formed his entire household, and only one willing visitor ever darkened his door, the widow Toelast. Dame Toelast was rich and almost as great a miser as Nicholas himself. "Why should not we two marry?" Nicholas had once croaked to the widow Toelast. "Together we should be masters of all Zandam." Dame Toelast had answered with a cackling laugh; but Nicholas was never in haste.

One afternoon, Nicholas Snyders sat alone at his desk in the centre of the great semi-circular room that took up half the ground floor of the windmill, and that served him for an office, and there came a knocking at the outer door.

"Come in!" cried Nicholas Snyders.

He spoke in a tone quite kind for Nicholas Snyders. He felt so sure it was Jan knocking at the door—Jan Van der Voort, the

young sailor, now master of his own ship, come to demand of him the hand of little Christina. In anticipation, Nicholas Snyders tasted the joy of dashing Jan's hopes to the ground; of hearing him plead, then rave; of watching the growing pallor that would overspread Jan's handsome face as Nicholas would, point by point, explain to him the consequences of defiance—how, firstly, Jan's old mother should be turned out of her home, his old father put into prison for debt; how, secondly, Jan himself should be pursued without remorse, his ship be bought over his head before he could complete the purchase. The interview would afford to Nicholas Snyders sport after his own soul. Since Jan's return the day before, he had been looking forward to it. Therefore, feeling sure it was Jan, he cried "Come in!" quite cheerily.

But it was not Jan. It was somebody Nicholas Snyders had never set eyes on before. And neither, after that one visit, did Nicholas Snyders ever set eyes upon him again. The light was fading, and Nicholas Snyders was not the man to light candles before they were needed, so that he was never able to describe with any precision the stranger's appearance. Nicholas thought he seemed an old man, but alert in all his movements; while his eyes—the one thing about him Nicholas saw with any clearness—were curiously bright and piercing.

"Who are you?" asked Nicholas Snyders, taking no pains to disguise his disappointment.

"I am a pedlar," answered the stranger. His voice was clear and not unmusical, with just the suspicion of roguishness behind.

"Not wanting anything," answered Nicholas Snyders drily. "Shut the door and be careful of the step."

But instead the stranger took a chair and drew it nearer, and, himself in shadow, looked straight into Nicholas Snyders' face and laughed.

"Are you quite sure, Nicholas Snyders? Are you quite sure there is nothing you require?"

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"Nothing," growled Nicholas Snyders—"except the sight of your back."

The stranger bent forward and with his long, lean hand touched Nicholas Snyders playfully upon the knee. "Wouldn't you like a soul, Nicholas Snyders?" he asked.

"Think of it," continued the strange pedlar, before Nicholas could recover power of speech. "For forty years you have drunk the joy of being mean and cruel. Are you not tired of the taste, Nicholas Snyders? Wouldn't you like a change? Think of it, Nicholas Snyders—the joy of being loved, of hearing yourself blessed, instead of cursed? Wouldn't it be good fun, Nicholas Snyders—just by way of a change? If you don't like it, you can return and be yourself again."

What Nicholas Snyders, recalling all things afterwards, could never understand was, why he sat there, listening in patience to the stranger's talk; for, at the time, it seemed to him the jesting of a wandering fool. But something about the stranger had impelled him.

"I have it with me," continued the odd pedlar; "and as for price——" The stranger made a gesture indicating dismissal of all sordid details. "I look for my reward in watching the result of the experiment. I am something of a philosopher. I take an interest in these matters. See." The stranger dived between his legs and produced from his pack a silver flask of cunning workmanship and laid it on the table.

"Its flavour is not unpleasant," explained the stranger. "A little bitter; but one does not drink it by the goblet: a wineglassful, such as one would of old Tokay, while the mind of both is fixed on the same thought: 'May my soul pass into him, may his pass into me!' The operation is quite simple: the secret lies within the drug." The stranger patted the quaint flask as though it had been some little dog.

"You will say: 'Who will exchange souls with Nicholas Snyders?'" The stranger appeared to have come prepared with an answer to all questions. "My friend, you are rich; you need not fear. It is the possession men value the least of all they have. Choose your soul and drive your bargain. I leave that to you with one word of counsel only: you will find the young readier than the old—the young, to whom the world promises all things for gold. Choose you a fine, fair, fresh, young soul, Nicholas Snyders; and choose it quickly. Your hair is somewhat grey, my friend. Taste, before you die, the joy of living."

The strange pedlar laughed and, rising, closed his pack. Nicholas Snyders neither moved nor spoke, until with the soft clanging of the massive door his senses returned to him. Then, seizing the flask the stranger had left behind him, he sprang from his chair, meaning to fling it after him into the street. But the flashing of the firelight on its burnished surface stayed his hand.

"After all, the case is of value," Nicholas chuckled, and put the flask aside and, lighting the two tall candles, buried himself again in his green-bound ledger. Yet still from time to time Nicholas Snyders' eye would wander to where the silver flask remained half hidden among dusty papers. And later there came again a knocking at the door, and this time it really was young Jan who entered.

Jan held out his great hand across the littered desk.

"We parted in anger, Nicholas Snyders. It was my fault. You were in the right. I ask you to forgive me. I was poor. It was selfish of me to wish the little maid to share with me my poverty. But now I am no longer poor."

"Sit down," responded Nicholas in kindly tone. "I have heard of it. So now you are master and the owner of your ship—your very own."

"My very own after one more voyage," laughed Jan. "I have Burgomaster Allart's promise."

"A promise is not a performance," hinted Nicholas. "Burgomaster Allart is not a rich man; a higher bid might tempt him. Another might step in between you and become the owner."

Jan only laughed. "Why, that would be the work of an enemy, which, God be praised, I do not think that I possess."

"Lucky lad!" commented Nicholas; "so few of us are without enemies. And your parents, Jan, will they live with you?"

"We wished it," answered Jan, "both Christina and I. But the mother is feeble. The old mill has grown into her life."

"I can understand," agreed Nicholas. "The old vine torn from the old wall withers. And your father, Jan; people will gossip. The mill is paying?"

Jan shook his head. "It never will again; and the debts haunt him. But all that, as I tell him, is a thing of the past. His creditors have agreed to look to me and wait."

"All of them?" queried Nicholas.

"All of them I could discover," laughed Jan.

Nicholas Snyders pushed back his chair and looked at Jan with a smile upon his

Snyders loved best beating the dog that growled and showed its teeth.

"Better not wait for that," said Nicholas Snyders. "You might have to wait long."

Jan rose, an angry flush upon his face. "So nothing changes you, Nicholas Snyders. Have it your own way, then."

"You will marry her in spite of me?"

"In spite of you and of your friends the fiends, and of your master the Devil!" flung out Jan. For Jan had a soul that was generous and brave and tender and excessively short-tempered. Even the best of souls have their failings.

"I am sorry," said old Nicholas.

"I am glad to hear it," answered Jan.

"I am sorry for your mother," explained Nicholas. "The poor dame, I fear, will be homeless in her old age. The mortgage shall be foreclosed, Jan, on your wedding day. I am sorry for your father, Jan. His creditors, Jan—you have overlooked just one. I am sorry for him, Jan. Prison has always been his dread. I am sorry even for you, my young friend. You will have to begin life over again. Burgomaster Allart

is in the hollow of my hand. I have but to say the word, your ship is mine. I wish you joy of your bride, my young friend. You must love her very dearly—you will be paying a high price for her."

It was Nicholas Snyders' grin that maddened Jan. He sought for something that,



"'So nothing changes you, Nicholas Snyders.'"

wrinkled face. "And so you and Christina have arranged it all?"

"With your consent, sir," answered Jan.

"You will wait for that?" asked Nicholas.

"We should like to have it, sir."

Jan smiled, but the tone of his voice fell agreeably on Nicholas Snyders' ear. Nicholas



"There sat Christina, asleep before the burnt-out grate."

thrown straight at the wicked mouth, should silence it, and by chance his hand lighted on the pedlar's silver flask. In the same instant Nicholas Snyders' hand had closed upon it also. The grin had died away.

"Sit down," commanded Nicholas Snyders. "Let us talk further." And there was that in his voice that compelled the younger man's obedience.

"You wonder, Jan, why I seek always anger and hatred. I wonder at times myself. Why do generous thoughts never come to me, as to other men? Listen, Jan; I am in a whimsical mood. Such things cannot be, but it is a whim of mine to think it might have been. Sell me your soul, Jan, sell me your soul, that I, too, may taste this love and gladness that I hear about. For a little while, Jan, only for a little while, and I will give you all you desire."

The old man seized his pen and wrote. "See, Jan, the ship is yours beyond mishap; the mill goes free; your father may hold up his head again. And all I ask, Jan, is that you drink to me, willing the while that your soul may go from you and become the soul of old Nicholas Snyders—for a little while, Jan, only for a little while."

With feverish hands the old man had drawn the stopper from the pedlar's flagon, had poured the wine into twin glasses. Jan's inclination was to laugh, but the old man's eagerness was almost frenzy. Surely he was mad; but that would not make less binding the paper he had signed. A true man does not jest with his soul, but the face of Christina was shining down on Jan from out the gloom.

"You will mean it?" whispered Nicholas Snyders.

"May my soul pass from me and enter into Nicholas Snyders!" answered Jan, replacing his empty glass upon the table. And the two stood looking for a moment into one another's eyes.

And the high candles on the littered desk flickered and went out, as though a breath had blown them, first one and then the other.

"I must be getting home," came the voice of Jan from the darkness. "Why did you blow out the candles?"

"We can light them again from the fire," answered Nicholas. He did not add he had meant to ask that same question of Jan. He thrust them among the glowing logs, first one and then the other; and the shadows crept back into their corners.

"You will not stop and see Christina?" asked Nicholas.

"Not to-night," answered Jan.

"The paper that I signed," Nicholas reminded him—"you have it?"

"I had forgotten it," Jan answered.

The old man took it from the desk and handed it to him. Jan thrust it into his pocket and went out. Nicholas bolted the door behind him and returned to his desk; sat long there, his elbow resting on the open ledger.

Nicholas pushed the ledger aside and laughed. "What foolery! As if such things could be! The fellow must have bewitched me."

Nicholas crossed to the fire and warmed his hands before the blaze. "Still, I am glad he is going to marry the little lass. A good lad, a good lad."

Nicholas must have fallen asleep before the fire. When he opened his eyes, it was to meet the grey dawn. He felt cold, stiff, hungry, and decidedly cross. Why had not Christina woke him up and given him his supper? Did she think he had intended to pass the night on a wooden chair? The girl was an idiot. He would go upstairs and tell her through the door just what he thought of her.

His way upstairs led through the kitchen. To his astonishment, there sat Christina, asleep before the burnt-out grate.

"Upon my word," muttered Nicholas to himself, "people in this house don't seem to know what beds are for!"

But it was not Christina, so Nicholas told himself. Christina had the look of a frightened rabbit: it had always irritated him. This girl, even in her sleep, wore an impertinent expression—a delightfully impertinent expression. Besides, this girl was

pretty—marvellously pretty. Indeed, so pretty a girl Nicholas had never seen in all his life before. Why had the girls, when Nicholas was young, been so entirely different! A sudden bitterness seized Nicholas: it was as though he had just learnt that long ago, without knowing it, he had been robbed.

The child must be cold. Nicholas fetched his fur-lined cloak and wrapped it about her.

There was something else he ought to do. The idea came to him while drawing the cloak around her shoulders, very gently, not to disturb her—something he wanted to do, if only he could think what it was. The girl's lips were parted. She appeared to be speaking to him, asking him to do this thing—or telling him not to do it: Nicholas could not be sure which. Half-a-dozen times he turned away, and half-a-dozen times stole back to where she sat sleeping with that delightfully impertinent expression on her face, her lips parted. But what she wanted, or what it was he wanted, Nicholas could not think.

Perhaps Christina would know. Perhaps Christina would know who she was and how she got there. Nicholas climbed the stairs, swearing at them for creaking.

Christina's door was open. No one was in the room; the bed had not been slept upon. Nicholas descended the creaking stairs.

The girl was still asleep. Could it be Christina herself? Nicholas examined the delicious features one by one. Never before, so far as he could recollect, had he seen the girl; yet around her neck—Nicholas had not noticed it before—lay Christina's locket, rising and falling as she breathed. Nicholas knew it well; the one thing belonging to her mother Christina had insisted on keeping, the one thing about which she had ever defied him. She would never have parted with that locket. It must be Christina herself. But what had happened to her?

Or to himself. Remembrance rushed in upon him. The old pedlar! The scene with Jan! But surely all that had been a dream? Yet there upon the littered desk still stood the pedlar's silver flask, together with the twin stained glasses.

Nicholas tried to think, but his brain was in a whirl. A ray of sunlight streaming through the window fell across the dusty room. Nicholas had never seen the sun, that he could recollect. Involuntarily he stretched his hands towards it, felt a pang of grief when it vanished, leaving only the grey light.

He drew the rusty bolts, flung open the great door. A strange world lay before him, a new world of lights and shadows, that wooed him with their beauty—a world of low, soft voices that called to him. There came to him again that bitter sense of having been robbed.

"I could have been so happy all these years," murmured old Nicholas to himself. "It is just the little town I could have loved—so quaint, so quiet, so homelike. I might have had friends, old cronies, children of my own maybe——"

A vision of the sleeping Christina flashed before his eyes. She had come to him a child, feeling only gratitude towards him. Had he had eyes with which to see her, all things might have been different.

Was it too late? He is not so old—not so very old. New life is in his veins. She still loves Jan, but that was the Jan of yesterday. In the future, Jan's every word and deed will be prompted by the evil soul that was once the soul of Nicholas Snyders—that Nicholas Snyders remembers well. Can any woman love that, let the case be as handsome as you will?

Ought he, as an honest man, to keep the soul he had won from Jan by what might be called a trick? Yes, it had been a fair bargain, and Jan had taken his price. Besides, it was not as if Jan had fashioned his own soul; these things are chance. Why should one man be given gold, and another be given parched peas? He has as much right to Jan's soul as Jan ever had. He is wiser, he can do more good with it. It was Jan's soul that loved Christina; let Jan's soul win her if it can. And Jan's soul, listening to the argument, could not think of a word to offer in opposition.

Christina was still asleep when Nicholas re-entered the kitchen. He lighted the fire and cooked the breakfast and then aroused her gently. There was no doubt it was Christina. The moment her eyes rested on old Nicholas, there came back to her the frightened rabbit look that had always irritated him. It irritated him now, but the irritation was against himself.

"You were sleeping so soundly when I came in last night——" Christina commenced.

"And you were afraid to wake me," Nicholas interrupted her. "You thought the old curmudgeon would be cross. Listen, Christina. You paid off yesterday the last debt your father owed. It was to an old sailor—I had not been able to find him before. Not a cent more do you owe, and

there remains to you, out of your wages, a hundred florins. It is yours whenever you like to ask me for it."

Christina could not understand, neither then nor during the days that followed; nor did Nicholas enlighten her. For the soul of Jan had entered into a very wise old man, who knew that the best way to live down the past is to live boldly the present. All that Christina could be sure of was that the old Nicholas Snyders had mysteriously vanished, that in his place remained a new Nicholas, who looked at her with kindly eyes—frank and honest, compelling confidence. Though Nicholas never said so, it came to Christina that she herself, her sweet example, her ennobling influence it was that had wrought this wondrous change. And to Christina the explanation seemed not impossible—seemed even pleasing.

The sight of his littered desk was hateful to him. Starting early in the morning, Nicholas would disappear for the entire day, returning in the evening tired but cheerful, bringing with him flowers that Christina laughed at, telling him they were weeds. But what mattered names? To Nicholas they were beautiful. In Zandam the children ran from him, the dogs barked after him. So Nicholas, escaping through byways, would wander far into the country. Children in the villages around came to know a kind old fellow who loved to linger, his hands resting on his staff, watching their play, listening to their laughter; whose ample pockets were storehouses of good things. Their elders, passing by, would whisper to one another how like he was in features to wicked old Nick, the miser of Zandam, and would wonder where he came from. Nor was it only the faces of the children that taught his lips to smile. It troubled him at first to find the world so full of marvellously pretty girls—of pretty women also, all more or less lovable: it bewildered him. Until he found that, notwithstanding, Christina remained always in his thoughts the prettiest, the most lovable of them all. Then every pretty face rejoiced him: it reminded him of Christina.

On his return the second day, Christina had met him with sadness in her eyes. Farmer Beerstraater, an old friend of her father's, had called to see Nicholas; not finding Nicholas, had talked a little with Christina. A hard-hearted creditor was turning him out of his farm. Christina pretended not to know that the creditor was Nicholas himself, but marvelled that such

wicked men could be. Nicholas said nothing, but the next day Farmer Beerstraater had called again, all smiles, blessings, and great wonder.

"But what can have come to him?" repeated Farmer Beerstraater over and over again.



"So Nicholas would wander far into the country."

Christina had smiled and answered that perhaps the good God had touched his heart; but thought to herself that perhaps it had been the good influence of another. The tale flew. Christina found herself besieged on every hand, and finding her intercessions invariably successful, grew day by day more

pleased with herself, and by consequence more pleased with Nicholas Snyders. For Nicholas was a cunning old gentleman. Jan's soul in him took delight in undoing the evil the soul of Nicholas had wrought. But the brain of Nicholas Snyders that

remained to him whispered: "Let the little maid think it is all her doing."

The news reached the ears of Dame Toelast. The same evening saw her seated in the ingle-nook opposite Nicholas Snyders, who smoked and seemed bored.

"You are making a fool of yourself, Nicholas Snyders," the Dame told him. "Everybody is laughing at you."

"I had rather they laughed than cursed me?" growled Nicholas.

"Have you forgotten all that has passed between us?" demanded the Dame.

"Wish I could," sighed Nicholas.

"At your age—" commenced the Dame.

"I am feeling younger than I ever felt in all my life," Nicholas interrupted her.

"You don't look it," commented the Dame.

"What do looks matter?" snapped Nicholas. "It is the soul of a man that is the real man."

"They count for something, as the world goes," explained the Dame. "Why, if I liked to follow your example and make a fool of myself, there are young men, fine young men, handsome young men——"

"Don't let me stand in your way," interposed Nicholas quickly. "As you say, I am

old and I have a devil of a temper. There must be many better men than I am, men more worthy of you."

"I don't say there are not," returned the Dame: "but nobody more suitable. Girls for boys, and old women for old men, as I have told them. I haven't lost my wits, Nicholas Snyders, if you have. When you are yourself again——"

"Nicholas Snyders sprang to his feet. "I am myself," he cried, "and intend to remain myself! Who dares say I am not myself?"

"I do," retorted the Dame with exasperating coolness. "Nicholas Snyders is not himself when at the bidding of a pretty-faced doll he flings his money out of the window with both hands. He is a creature bewitched, and I am sorry for him. She'll fool you for the sake of her friends till you haven't a cent left, and then she'll laugh at you. When you are yourself, Nicholas Snyders, you will be crazy with yourself—remember that." And Dame Toelast marched out and slammed the door behind her.

"Girls for boys, and old women for old men." The phrase kept ringing in his ears. Hitherto his new-found happiness had filled his life, leaving no room for thought. But the old Dame's words had sown the seed of reflection.

Was Christina fooling him? The thought was impossible. Never once had she pleaded for herself, never once for Jan. The evil thought was the creature of Dame Toelast's evil mind. Christina loved him. Her face brightened at his coming. The fear of him had gone out of her; a pretty tyranny had replaced it. But was it the love that he sought? Jan's soul in old Nick's body was young and ardent. It desired Christina not as a daughter, but as a wife. Could it win her in spite of old Nick's body? The soul of Jan was an impatient soul. Better to know than to doubt.

"Do not light the candles; let us talk a little by the light of the fire only," said Nicholas. And Christina, smiling, drew her chair towards the blaze. But Nicholas sat in the shadow.

"You grow more beautiful every day, Christina," said Nicholas—"sweeter and more womanly. He will be a happy man who calls you wife."

The smile passed from Christina's face. "I shall never marry," she answered.

"Never is a long word, little one."

"A true woman does not marry the man she does not love."

"But may she not marry the man she does?" smiled Nicholas.

"Sometimes she may not," Christina explained.

"And when is that?"

Christina's face was turned away. "When he has ceased to love her."

The soul in old Nick's body leapt with joy. "He is not worthy of you, Christina. His new fortune has changed him. Is it not so? He thinks only of money. It is as though the soul of a miser had entered into him. He would marry even Dame Toelast for the sake of her gold-bags and her broad lands and her many mills, if only she would have him. Cannot you forget him?"

"I shall never forget him. I shall never love another man. I try to hide it; and often I am content to find there is so much in the world that I can do. But my heart is breaking." She rose and, kneeling beside him, clasped her hands around him. "I am glad you have let me tell you," she said. "But for you I could not have borne it. You are so good to me."

For answer he stroked with his withered hand the golden hair that fell disordered about his withered knees. She raised her eyes to his; they were filled with tears, but smiling.

"I cannot understand," she said. "I think sometimes that you and he must have changed souls. He is hard and mean and cruel, as you used to be." She laughed, and the arms around him tightened for a moment. "And now you are kind and tender and great, as once he was. It is as if the good God had taken away my lover from me to give to me a father."

"Listen to me, Christina," he said. "It is the soul that is the man, not the body. Could you not love me for my new soul?"

"But I do love you," answered Christina, smiling through her tears.

"Could you as a husband?"

The firelight fell upon her face. Nicholas, holding it between his withered hands, looked into it long and hard; and reading what he read there, laid it back against his breast and soothed it with his withered hand.

"I was jesting, little one," he said. "Girls for boys, and old women for old men. And so, in spite of all, you still love Jan?"

"I love him," answered Christina. "I cannot help it."

"And if he would, you would marry him, let his soul be what it may?"

"I love him," answered Christina. "I cannot help it."

Old Nicholas sat alone before the dying fire. Is it the soul or the body that is the



"So from the deck of Jan's ship they watched old Zandam."

real man? The answer was not so simple as he had thought it.

"Christina loved Jan"—so Nicholas mumbled to the dying fire—"when he had the soul of Jan. She loves him still, though he has the soul of Nicholas Snyders. When I asked her if she could love me, it was terror I read in her eyes, though Jan's soul is now in me; she divined it. It must be the body that is the real Jan, the real Nicholas. If the soul of Christina entered into the body of Dame Toelast, should I turn from Christina, from her golden hair, her fathomless eyes, her asking lips, to desire the shrivelled carcass of Dame Toelast? No; I should still shudder at the thought of her. Yet, when I had the soul of Nicholas Snyders, I did not loathe her, while Christina was naught to me. It must be with the soul that we love, else Jan would still love Christina and I should be Miser Nick. Yet here am I loving Christina, using Nicholas Snyders' brain and gold to thwart Nicholas Snyders' every scheme, doing everything that I know will make him mad when he comes back into his own body; while Jan cares no longer for Christina, would marry Dame Toelast for her broad lands, her many mills. Clearly it is the soul that is the real man. Then ought I not to be glad, thinking I am going back into my own body, knowing that I shall wed Christina? But I am not glad; I am very miserable. I shall not go with Jan's soul, I feel it; my own soul will come back to me. I shall be again the hard, cruel, mean old man I was before, only now I shall be poor and helpless. The folks will laugh at me, and I shall curse them, powerless to do them evil. Even Dame Toelast will not want me when she learns all. And yet I must do this thing. So long as Jan's soul is in me, I love Christina better than myself. I must do this for her sake. I love her—I cannot help it."

Old Nicholas rose, took from the place where a month before he had hidden it, the silver flask of cunning workmanship.

"Just two more glassfuls left, about," mused Nicholas, as he gently shook the flask against his ear. He laid it on the desk before him, then opened once again the old green ledger, for there still remained work to be done.

He woke Christina early. "Take these letters, Christina," he commanded. "When you have delivered them all, but not before, go to Jan; tell him I am waiting here to see him on a matter of business." He kissed her and seemed loth to let her go.

"I shall only be a little while," smiled Christina.

"All partings take but a little while," he answered.

Old Nicholas had foreseen the trouble he would have. Jan was content, had no desire to be again a sentimental young fool, eager to saddle himself with a penniless wife. Jan had other dreams.

"Drink, man, drink!" cried Nicholas impatiently, "before I am tempted to change my mind. Christina, provided you marry her, is the richest bride in Zandam. There is the deed; read it; and read quickly."

Then Jan consented, and the two men drank. And there passed a breath between them as before; and Jan with his hands covered his eyes a moment.

It was pity, perhaps, that he did so, for in that moment Nicholas snatched at the deed that lay beside Jan on the desk. The next instant it was blazing in the fire.

"Not so poor as you thought!" came the croaking voice of Nicholas. "Not so poor as you thought! I can build again, I can build again!" And the creature, laughing hideously, danced with its withered arms spread out before the blaze, lest Jan should seek to rescue Christina's burning dowry before it was destroyed.

Jan did not tell Christina. In spite of all Jan could say, she would go back. Nicholas Snyders drove her from the door with curses. She could not understand. The only thing clear was that Jan had come back to her.

"Twas a strange madness that seized upon me," Jan explained. "Let the good sea breezes bring us health."

So from the deck of Jan's ship they watched old Zandam till it vanished into air.

Christina cried a little at the thought of never seeing it again; but Jan comforted her, and later new faces hid the old.

And old Nicholas married Dame Toelast, but, happily, lived to do evil only for a few years longer.

Years after, Jan told Christina the whole story, but it sounded very improbable, and Christina—though, of course, she did not say so—did not quite believe it, but thought Jan was trying to explain away that strange month of his life during which he had wooed Dame Toelast. Yet it certainly was strange that Nicholas, for the same short month, had been so different from his usual self.

"Perhaps," thought Christina, "if I had not told him I loved Jan, he would not have gone back to his old ways. Poor old gentleman! No doubt it was despair."

THE UNKNOWN QUANTITY.

By ALICK MUNRO.*



MERRICK was a crank. There were even those who said that he was a dangerous crank and feared for his sanity. I thought him an enthusiast and knew him to be an extraordinarily able mathematician; and I had suspicions that he had been experimenting lately with opium. These facts, I thought, accounted for most things.

Moreover, he was a Don, and I was only an undergraduate in my fourth year. So when he condescended to make a chum of me during that Vac., I was flattered; and when people—the Dean among others—shook their heads forebodingly and hinted that he was on the road to a lunatic asylum, I made it a point of honour to lose my temper in his defence.

I had come up early to Oxford that term to read for my physiology finals, and to put in a little dissecting at the Museum before the lectures began. Merrick invariably spent his Christmas vacations in Oxford, and the Dean had come up to attend to official business, so we three had the college to ourselves. Four nights before the beginning of term, I was reading in my rooms, very late, when Merrick flung the door open suddenly and stood in the doorway, laughing and making quick little movements with his fingers. The cord of his dressing-gown caught for a moment in the wire letter-box of the "oak," and the heavy door closed with a snap behind him, shutting out the light from the gas-jets on the staircase. He stood in the space between the two doors, smiling with the leer of a cathedral grotesque, and my reading-lamp picked him out in silhouette against the black panels. It was a curious picture, elfish and uncanny; for he was ugly, with the fine ugliness of perfect features which do not match. His shadow on the "oak" was a nightmare by Doré.

I closed my notebook and pointed to a

chair. He threw himself into it, laughing still. I noticed that the pupils of his eyes were shrunk to pin-points, and there was the gleam of a faint perspiration on his forehead. I leaned over quickly and touched his hand. He had crossed two quads to come from his rooms to mine, and I had seen an hour ago that the thermometer at the foot of the staircase registered fourteen degrees of frost; but his skin was warm and moist.

He knew what my action meant and he laughed again softly.

"Yes," he said, "I admit it. That's the worst of you physiologists, you're trained detectives. Luckily you're not given to preaching."

"How much to-day?" I asked.

"About 120 drops, I think—*Tinct: Opii: B.P.*—and I mean to try 200 to-morrow. But De Quincey used to take 8,000."

"Why do you do it?" I asked. "You know the risks."

"I can stop it when I please."

"That," I said slowly, "is the risk."

"Is it?" he cried, jumping to his feet and throwing his head back. "Then I accept it! You mean that I can't stop it. Well, if I can't—what then?"

"An asylum, perhaps."

"But I have done my work first, and the stuff has helped me!" he cried with a strange violence. "Look at me and tell me what kind of man you see! A little, big-headed, mathematical tutor, ugly as a gargoyle, and pitied for his ugliness by every Somerville girl who attends his lectures. Yes, I'm that. But to-night I am as a god, knowing good and evil. And you—you, the physiologist—you who dissect emotions with a scalpel, and know of nothing in man that your knife cannot cut—you would put the god into a lunatic asylum!"

He broke off suddenly, seemed to pull himself up sharply as a man puts the curb on a runaway, and then went on quietly again with a half-apologetic gesture—

"Sorry, old man; I'm letting myself exaggerate, and that's unscientific. Un-mathematical, too, so it jars on us both. No, I'm not a god yet, because I don't know the unknowable. But here's fact—demonstrable

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fact—I have pushed back the limit of the knowable so far to-night that I can see behind the veil, and I know how and why I see. There is another world, in and about the material world which alone you can see, which alone I could see till an hour ago. I have seen it and I have discovered the law which rules it."

He stopped and gazed into the fire. His violence was gone, and he had spoken these last sentences with as little passion as he would have shown in demonstrating a problem of the higher mathematics; but the light of a conquering enthusiasm glowed about him. He looked up into my face, waiting for me to speak.

"Others," I said, "have claimed that power before you. But they have used it to tell fortunes or to turn tables. They say they come from Thibet mostly, and speak with the accent of Whitechapel."

"Quacks!" he said with a laugh. "You're a little bit cruel."

"Some of them believed honestly in the powers they professed," I answered. "The Psychical Research Society——"

"Is a jury of old women," he cut in, "and as gullible. They know some truths, and they swallow many lies. I won't lay my discovery before them!"

"What is your discovery?"

He took out a pipe, asked me for tobacco by a gesture, filled the pipe slowly, lit it carefully, and then lay back in his chair and blew clouds about his head. Then he said quietly: "The Fourth Dimension."

"Ah! An inconceivable non-existence! You called it that yourself the other night," I reminded him.

"Did I? I was in the dumps that night. I have proved now that it does exist."

I looked at the glistening forehead and the beaded pupils, and I smiled as I suggested softly: "In an opium dream."

"No," he said; "on paper. Mathematically demonstrable, if you had the knowledge to enable you to follow my proof."

"But I haven't," I said. And then, for his earnestness impressed me, I added: "Can you tell me without formulæ?"

He was an orator. I had never suspected it till now, for he had the reputation of being a bad lecturer of good lectures. Was it the opium—"eloquent opium," as De Quincey calls it. Or was it only the gift of tongues which comes to every man when his thoughts are big and his enthusiasm is new? He told me of months of work, all tending to the same goal; of calculations begun with an

eager hope and never finished, because despair foreshadowed an impotent conclusion; of the steady building up of a theory by a page, a line, a single formula, the result of many nights of toil; and then of the little error which shattered the whole fabric and sent him back to the starting-place; of doubts whether the problem were soluble at all; of certainty that he, and he alone, would find the solution. And lastly, of success.

I have watched a girl's face when she told that the man she loved had asked her to be his wife; and I have watched Merrick's, when he spoke, and spoke quietly, of the moment when he knew that he had succeeded. The look in both was the same, and yet the girl was beautiful.

Stripped of its technicalities, his argument was not difficult to follow. "Common belief," he said, "recognises three dimensions only—two horizontal and one vertical—and calls them length, breadth, and height; and the world of phenomena is contained in those three. And common belief is in this case supported by science, which declares that anything beyond this is philosophically inconceivable. But it is only an arbitrary boundary, after all, a terminus imposed by the limitations of our merely human senses. Suppose, for the sake of argument, a being so constituted that he was able to appreciate only two of the dimensions which make up our world, say length and breadth. To such a being everything would be flat, the surface of a carpet seen from the floor-level, a map to be studied by an eye in the paper on which it was drawn; height and thickness would be notions which he could not grasp; solidity would, to him, be non-existent. You, with your three-dimension senses, know that there is such a thing as solidity, but my two-dimension being would not understand you when you spoke of it. He would tell you that the third dimension, by which you endeavoured to explain the thing which he could not imagine, was philosophically inconceivable. And, of course, he would be right."

Merrick paused, smoked for a while in silence, and then went on.

"He would be right, absolutely right, within his limitations; to him a third dimension would be philosophically inconceivable. And you, when you say that there are three dimensions and only three, are right, within your limitations; to you a fourth dimension is philosophically inconceivable. And I, when I say that there is a fourth dimension, am right, too; for I have seen it."



"My reading-lamp picked him out in silhouette against the black panels."

"Do you see it now?" I asked.

"No. At this moment it is to me, as to you, philosophically inconceivable. A convenient phrase that, by the way. I cannot tell you what it is; I cannot even imagine it—just now. But an hour ago I could and did see it, for a moment; and I can tell you something of what it showed me. Do you believe in clairvoyance?"

"I don't know," I said. "The evidence is difficult, but I think I do."

"You think you do! Then you have an aid to understanding which I had not, for I started on my quest as a sceptic. I did not believe in the thing I set out to prove—handicap enough, that, to any investigator—and yet I have proved it. Come to my rooms and see my work."

"Shall I understand it?"

"No."

"Then let's stay here. Can't you give me some hint of what this fourth dimension is?—some analogy which will help me to imagine it? Bring the idea down to my level."

"I can't—any more than you could bring the idea of solidity down to the level of our two-dimension being. That's just the difficulty. I don't for a moment suppose that I'm the first who has worked the thing out. Others have done before what I did this afternoon; but they were not believed, because they could not explain. I shall not be believed either, because I can't explain. Man, don't you see that if I could explain to the world of three dimensions what I mean by the fourth, the world of three dimensions would, by the mere act of understanding, become a world of four? I *can't* tell you what it is; and even if you were to see it yourself as I saw it, I doubt whether we should understand one another if we tried to put into words what we saw. It is all indefinite; a mere shadow of thinking, and hardly that. A shadow's shadow is all."

"And yet," I objected, "you were definite enough just now. You called yourself a god, who had pushed back the curtain of the unknowable."

"Hyperbole, of course; but I was speaking by results," he answered. "You do not know what electricity is—no one living does—but you judge it by what it does, and lay down laws for its action. You asked for an analogy just now. There I give it you. I do not know what the Fourth Dimension is; but I judge it by what it showed me. And later, when I know more of it, I too will perhaps turn theorist and lay down my little parcel of laws. Meanwhile listen!

"For a certain space of time this afternoon—a moment or an hour, I do not know—I transcended the limits of human sense. Space was annihilated, and all time was the present. The material barriers of sense did not exist for me. No walls hid the faces of my friends from me. Yesterday was to-day, the past was now, and my whole life focused itself upon a moment. And yet the details were all sharp and clear; it was no blurred and confused image, but a precise actuality. Every place my memory held a picture of, every person I had ever known, every word I had spoken, every thought of my forty-three years of life—all these were before me, simultaneously, and yet separately; comprehensively, yet definitely; as one harmonious picture, and as a thousand separate scenes. It was grand. It was a revelation of the infinitely great and of the infinitely little, and of infinite harmony in both great and little. And it was very terrible. I saw myself as a child of four, playing with a spade in a sand-hole; and I saw myself sitting at my desk to-day, with a pen in my hand and a paper of formulæ before me. I saw you—Ah!" he broke off, "you asked for proofs! but will you believe them?"

"If I can understand them," I said.

"Oh, the old proviso!" he answered impatiently. "The old, hackneyed, unnecessary cry for understanding! Why should you understand? Is a man to believe nothing, then, that he does not understand?"

"Yes," I said. "Many things. But belief comes easier when——"

"When understanding—poor, finite, three-dimension human understanding—backs it!" he finished for me. "Well, you will understand this. I saw you at your work in the Museum this afternoon. You were dissecting, and your subject—stop me if I am wrong—was a body very much emaciated, hardly more than a skeleton. The ribs stuck out through the stretched skin like basket-work, and all the organs were terribly wasted. The state of the lungs—you were dissecting the lungs—told you that death had been due to acute pleurisy. Am I right?"

"Absolutely, so far. There were extensive adhesions on both sides."

"Yes, I saw that; and I saw that you found the dissection difficult because of those adhesions. Your subject was a somewhat unusual one to find in an English dissecting-room—darker in the skin than an Englishman usually is, and more hairy—in fact, not an Englishman at all. Again am I right?"

"Certainly not an Englishman," I said; "but——"

"Wait!" he interrupted. "Let me tell the thing in my own way. I want to convince you. He wasn't an Englishman, but a native of sunnier climes, and the rigour of our English winter had been too much for him. Well, that often happens; so we will leave him and talk of something else. Did I ever tell you that I was once in the Diplomatic Service?"

The *non sequitur* was violent. Merrick's eyes had grown dull, and the whites were bloodshot. His excitement had vanished. I judged that the opium was running its course.

"No," I said, "I did not know it. But about this dissection subject of mine—I don't think——"

"Oh, never mind him! He can wait! He's dead, poor devil! so he won't grow impatient. Besides, I'm coming back to him later. I want to talk about a girl now. No, it's all right, old man; don't be alarmed; I'm not wandering. You'll see presently how the girl fits in to everything I've been telling you. But don't interrupt. I *must* tell the story in my own way. I've got a curious sensation just now, as though the working part of my brain had taken the reins into its own hands and were following a line of thought of its own, without any particular need of guidance from me. I see where the line is leading, and it's all right; but if you drive me off the track, I don't think I could get back to-night. And I want to tell you the thing to-night.

"She was a governess—nothing more than that. I believe you might even have called her a nursery governess without being insulting, for her charge was a kid of seven, the daughter of one of the Embassy secretaries. But, bless you! she was only seventeen herself, and she had what people call 'a way with her'; so the whole Paris Embassy just conspired to make a pet of her, and gave her about as good a time as any girl need want to have. It wasn't the conventional, down-trodden, self-effacing *rôle* that Molly Wisdom was called upon to play. Quaint name, isn't it? But the Little Wisdom, as we called her, wasn't very wise, after all. She was too childish, too pretty, and too lavishly spoiled and worshipped to give her a chance of being wise. We English *attachés*—I was the most junior of 'em—were all her slaves to a man; but of the lot of us, I believed I was the favourite. She treated us all pretty much like a squad of good-natured elder

brothers, and used freely her privilege of ordering us about. But in spite of this, I wasn't jealous of the other fellows—not particularly, that is. I was an ugly little wretch, you know, even in those days; but my ugliness was luckily pronounced enough to win me a certain distinction, while the others were just average, decent-looking young Englishmen, neither particularly plain nor particularly handsome, merely ordinary. That being so, I thought, and I think still, that in the matter of looks the advantage lay with me.

"But though my ugliness put me easily ahead of these fellows who were merely ordinary, it wasn't a strong enough weapon to fight against a beauty that was as extraordinary as my ugliness. Beauty isn't a term that one naturally applies to a man; but Manoel D'Albuquerque was beautiful. And of him I was jealous, hysterically, insanely jealous. He was a Brazilian Portuguese, absurdly rich, and maddeningly gentle-tempered. He would let no one ruffle him, though my fingers itched to spring on him and score his cheeks with my nails, like any harri-*dan* in a slum brawl. He roused all the devil there was in me, but he wouldn't quarrel.

"Molly was fascinated by him. I asked her to be my wife, and she refused me; and I knew it was because of him. If you know anything of Brazilians, you can picture faintly the sort of beauty that the brute had, black and bright, very brilliant, and devilish. Lots of them have got it, but this one was the most brilliant of them all. He was not a cad, either—perfectly straight, perfectly gentlemanly, and universally popular. I tried my hardest to find out something to his discredit; but I failed. The man was a gentleman all right. And I, in my efforts to give him a fall, did things which hardly left me the right to claim as much.

"I heard that he had asked Molly to marry him, and that she had said 'Yes.' I took the news with a smile, and affected to be glad that she was making such a brilliant match. I chatted for a while with the woman who told me, and then I went to my bedroom; and I think that, for one night, I went mad. If a Bedlamite jealousy and a mind that riots in schemes of murder constitute madness, then I was mad. But I did not make a scene. I fled. I would have killed him, and laughed as I did it, if I could have struck him without striking Molly too. But since she loved him, that was impossible.

"I did not try to see her again. I wrote a brief note to the Ambassador, resigning my appointment, and then, as I tell you, fled. I didn't stop to think. If I had done that, I should have killed D'Albuquerque. I boarded the Sud-Express and found myself in Madrid before I had decided what I meant to do. I stayed there a day, roaming the streets like a man demented, and then in the afternoon I found myself watching a bullfight. How I got there, I do not know, nor why I went; but I think it was the sight of a horse's blood spouting on to the sand, and the poor gored brute's dying agonies, that first brought me to my senses and revealed to me that my thoughts were bloody, too. In the midst of that shouting Spanish mob, with my eyes following the incidents of the mixture of graceful play and callous cruelty which is a Spanish bullfight, I sat and thought out what I must do.

"I very nearly went back to Paris; for my maniac jealousy was still prompting me to murder. I saw a *matador* go down as his horse fell, and the bull gored him. The noisy crowd was hushed for a moment. Dead, or only hurt? They carried him out, and a minute later the ring was applauding a smart piece of dart work by a *banderillero*. There were parables in this for me. What a simple thing seemed the death of a man, and how little the world regarded it, since it could not still the laughter of this holiday crowd for more than a moment! The *matador*, I heard someone near me say, was the famous Brazilian *espaula*, Gonsalvez Quelho. A Brazilian, was he? And dead? There were omens and oracles in this, too. I nearly went back even then.

"But I was growing calmer now and saner. I did not go back to Paris. I went on to Gib, thence to Morocco, and the peace of the desert healed me. In a month I was my own man again—still madly in love with Molly, and still jealous of the man who had won her. But my jealousy was no longer extravagant and murderous. It had lost its froth, but its bite was, I think, all the keener on that account. Fortunately the wrecking of my career did not matter much. I have money, and it was just as well spent in world-loafing for my own good as it would have been in wearing a frock-coat and a white waistcoat for my country's. So for two years I loafed, and then I came back to Oxford. My college gave me a Fellowship, for in my day I had been one of their brilliant men. That's a good while ago now, though, and lately I've had the notion borne

in upon me that I'm not so popular with them as I was. They are—shall we say?—disappointed in me. Well, youthful brilliancy isn't a good wearing stuff at the best."

Merrick stopped speaking and sat with his chin in his hands, watching the frosty blue in the fire. His voice in the latter part of his tale had grown dull and weary, and I saw that he had difficulty in keeping his eyes from closing. Now that his excitement was dead, he looked tired and ill. I waited a moment for him to speak again and then I touched his arm.

"How long is it since you slept?" I asked.

"I don't know," he answered drowsily. "About two days, I suppose. I've been working."

"And taking opium?" I asked.

"Only this afternoon. It helped me to finish."

"Well, go to bed now."

He stood up and yawned heavily.

"All right," he said. "But don't you want the sequel?"

"Do you know it?"

"Yes," he said, with another yawn. "Saw it all this afternoon. It's rather a queer end, you know, because——" He yawned again. "I say, old man, I'm awfully sleepy. Come to my rooms with me."

I put my arm round him, for he was swaying with sleep.

"Well?" I said, as I helped him down the stairs. "The sequel?"

"Eh? The sequel?" he answered, speaking in drowsy jerks. "I don't know. Queer! I knew five minutes ago. It's—no, I've forgotten."

His head fell forward and all his weight came upon me. The drug, kept at bay hitherto by an unnatural excitement, would be denied no longer. He was fast asleep, and I had to carry him across the two quads to his rooms.

During the next two days I saw nothing of him. I went to his rooms three times, but twice out of the three he was not there, and the other time his scout told me that he was sleeping heavily and had been in bed all the morning. On the last night of the Vac. I went again and found him at his desk, writing busily. He looked up at my entrance, jerked his head in the direction of an armchair, and went on writing. I sat down and waited for him. For ten minutes or so he continued; then with a scrawl and a flourish he finished and threw down his pen.



"'I have seen her in the flesh, here, in Oxford, day before yesterday.'"

"There," he said, "that's done, so far as I am concerned. But I think I must get you to write a postscript."

"What is it?" I asked.

"A biography. How's the dissecting getting on?"

"Finished," I said. "The rooms will be cleared to-morrow to make room for the term's work."

"Ah! So you've finished, too. Good!" he said, with a satisfaction that seemed to me rather pointless; and then turning sharply and facing me, he added: "What becomes of the bodies when you've done with them?"

"The human subjects are buried. I don't know about the others."

"Christian burial?"

"Yes, I believe so. Why?"

"Oh, nothing. I think it ought to be, that's all. Have a drink?"

"No, thank you. I'm going to read presently. I only came to see how you were."

"You are anxious about me?"

"I think you take too much opium."

With a laugh he stood up and came opposite to me, bringing his face close to mine and holding his hand out for me to grasp.

"See for yourself," he said. "Skin dry, pupils reasonably dilated. You can read the signs?"

I took the hand he offered and looked closely into his eyes. He met my scrutiny steadily, and his pulse beat firm under my fingers.

"You have not taken any to-day," I said. "I am glad."

"Nor yesterday; nor shall I to-morrow," he told me. "I have given it up absolutely, because I have got something new to live for—something that will not allow of my taking the risks that the drug holds. Will you guess what that something is?"

"Your discovery?"

"Oh, yes, that! But something better than that, too. I have seen her, you know."

I nodded. "Yes," I answered; "I supposed you had. In fact, you told me you had. *'Every face I had ever known—every thought of my forty-three years of life.'* Those were your words. Molly Wisdom's face would naturally be in the picture."

"Oh! then?" he cried. "Yes, of course, I saw her then! But I don't mean that. I mean that I have seen her in the flesh, here, in Oxford, day before yesterday; to be precise, in Blackwell's shop in the Broad,

at 10.15 a.m. She was buying copybooks. You see what that means?"

"Children," I suggested. "Then the Brazilian——"

"Yes, children, of course," he interrupted. "But not her own. She is a nursery governess still, and she's still Molly Wisdom. So, you see"—he gave me a queer look—"it is worth my while to do without the opium."

"Did you speak to her?"

"Yes. We talked for an hour, and she told me of her life. It is fifteen years since I saw her, remember. But each thing she told me I knew before she told it. I had seen it all three days ago; but I let her tell on, for it was pleasant to hear her voice again. When I came to your rooms the other night, I knew that she had not married the Brazilian, and that I was going to see her again soon. I meant to tell you that, if I had not grown so sleepy. It was a tragic blunder that I made in Paris fifteen years ago; for she did not accept him, as I had been told, and as, in my senseless jealousy, I believed. She refused him; and if I had stayed, perhaps I might have won her, after all. I'm going to try now, if it isn't too late. Man, can you realise the tragedy of those fifteen years? For me—wasted; and for her——Poor little Molly! a nursery governess still!"

He began to pace the room. His lip was trembling, and his fingers were twitching with emotion, as they had twitched once before when he proclaimed to me that he was a god; but this was the generous emotion that does a man's nerves good and keeps his heart young, not the fantastic enthusiasm of that scene of three nights ago.

"How goes the discovery?" I asked him. "Have you learned anything more about it?"

"No," he said, "I have not. And, what's worse, I can't. I tried to-day, repeating the method that was successful before, but I got no result. However, I don't despair. I may have made some error in my calculations to-day that I avoided the other time; something very small it may have been—must have been, in fact—because I went through all the work twice and I couldn't find it. Or there may have been something in my own state of mind or health—in default of a better term, shall we say some psychic condition?—which was present three days ago and absent to-day. I am working very much in the dark as yet, you understand;

but I shall go on trying. I have succeeded once, so I shall succeed again. And it's worth a bit of hard work."

"What would you say if I told you where the error was?" I asked.

"Say? I'd bless you. But you can't. You don't understand my work."

"Granted. But I can put my finger on your error. It is merely this—you left out the unknown quantity."

He gave me a quick look. "Perhaps," he said. "But that's what I intended to convey by the term 'psychic condition.' It's quite an unknown quantity as yet. We will call it the personal equation, if you like the term better."

"Suppose we call it opium?" I said.

He did not answer for a moment; but I saw by his quick frown, and the absence of any surprise, that I had not suggested a new idea to him.

"Is that what you really think?" he asked at length, as he reached for the pile of manuscript which he had called a biography.

"Yes," I said.

For in spite of what he had told me about knowing Molly's words before they were spoken, and in spite of coincidences that were curious, I believed now that his vision of the Fourth Dimension was nothing but an opium dream.

"Then," he said, as he threw the closely written sheets on to my knees, "how do you explain this?"

"What is it?"

"A narrative of the life of Manoel D'Albuquerque, from a date fifteen years ago to nearly the present time. It is written by me, and yet I give you my word that from that day in Paris till now I have had no news of him. I have never spoken his name to anyone till I told it to you the other night, and I have never heard it spoken. Even Molly did not mention him yesterday."

"Then," I said, "this narrative is purely imaginary."

"It is fact."

"Ah! if you could prove that!"

"Why not? A man does not walk through life without leaving tracks. We can hunt up those tracks, if necessary. But it won't be necessary, because you can furnish the proof."

"I?" I asked in astonishment. "How?"

"Read what I have written, and see. I have left the last half-page blank for you to fill in what you like. I told you I should want you to write a tailpiece for me. No, don't read it here. It's long, and I want to

do some more work before I go to bed. Take it to your rooms. I will come for it in the morning. Good-night, and try, if you can, not to be so confoundedly sceptical. You physiologists are all tarred with the brush of unbelief; and, if you will take an older man's word for it, it's a brush that leaves a nasty smudge. Good-night."

He opened the door and waited for me to go. He was out of temper, and I fancied that it was my suggestion about the unknown quantity that had annoyed him. I should have liked to stay, but he was a Don and I was an undergraduate, so I had to accept my dismissal.

His manuscript kept me awake half the night. I read it and re-read it, and marvelled at its power. It realised more completely than anything I had ever read the Aristotelian definition of tragedy—pity and terror; but the terror, the horror, rather—came first, and the pity only towards the end. It told of the gradual moral degeneration of a brilliant man, and then of his material ruin. Step by step his career was traced, each step a little lower than the one before. But there was nothing artificial in the tale, nothing forced, no development that did not arise naturally from all that had preceded it; the man seemed to be driven steadily downwards by a Nemesis that he could not fight. Each step in the descent was forced upon him irresistibly, inevitably; and yet—and in this was the greatest horror—one knew that it was all his own fault. A Nemesis pursued him, indeed; but it was the Nemesis of his own actions. He was loaded with a chain of his own forging.

If it was fact, it was terrible. If it was fiction, it was hardly less terrible. For it was plain to see how Merrick had hated the man.

His fall was described with a skill that amounted to genius; but for the first three-quarters of the tale it was an uncanny genius, cold and cruel in its vindictiveness. Towards the end, the writer's mood seemed to have changed; the pity of what he wrote seemed to take hold of him and to make him forget his hate. The last scene but one, a scene in a county lunatic asylum, was written with a compelling simplicity and with a wonderful tenderness. It was the deathbed of an unknown, unnamed pauper—the man who had once been Manoel D'Albuquerque.

Had the story ended there, I might have believed that it was true, that in some strange way Merrick had really seen the

things which he wrote. But there was one page more, a picture of the dissecting-room in which I had been working; and from this I knew that all the rest was false. Here, where Merrick expected me to prove him right, I proved him wrong. I wrote three sentences in the blank space he had left for me; and the story, horrible before, became, by the addition, merely fantastic.

Next day he came to my rooms immediately after Hall, and before I could speak, demanded my congratulations.

"We are to be married in the summer Vac.," he said, and his face was radiant with happiness.

"I am glad," I said simply, "because now I know that you will be safe. You were on a dangerous road, you know. And, by the way, I have written that postscript you wanted."

I expected him to be eager to see what I had written. Instead, he looked uncomfortable. He opened the manuscript and read my three sentences aloud.

"You are wrong. As this is Vacation time, there are no bodies in the rooms at all. I have been dissecting a monkey."

"Well?" I asked, as he folded the paper up and seemed disinclined to speak.

"It is very queer," he said. "I don't understand it. Molly told me this morning that the man is alive and living in Paris now with his wife and three children. And yet I felt so sure that I knew. I wonder if you are right, and if the road to the Fourth Dimension does lie only down the path of drugs. Well, I have sworn to tread that path no more. So, if you are right, I shall not see it again."

"Will that matter," I asked, "since it showed you what was false?"

"Not all false!" he exclaimed with a sudden emphasis. "No, by Heaven, not all! For it told me that I should meet Molly again and be happy. I have met her, and we shall be happy; for there are fifteen years of misery to be blotted out."

AT SUNSET TIME.

ACROSS the uplands all day long
The wind's wild song
Walls like the spirits of the lost,
In pine trees tossed.
Rest follows storm. Day has its crown.
At sunset time the wind goes down.

The wind shrieks out the livelong day
Across the bay;
With tears the women watch from far
Ships on the bar.
Joy follows tears. Day has its crown.
At sunset time the wind goes down.

Pain's tossing winds sweep wailing by,
Make dark our sky;
On Life's rough waves, like ships at sea
We seem to be.
Peace follows strife. Life has its crown.
At sunset time the wind goes down.

L. G. MOBERLY.

WITH THE NIGHT MAIL.

By RUDYARD KIPLING.

From "The Windsor Magazine," October, A.D. 2147.



AT 9.30 p.m. of a windy winter's night I stood on the lower stages of the G.P.O. Outward Mail Tower. My purpose was a run to Quebec in "postal packet 162, or such other as may be appointed"; and the

Postmaster-General himself countersigned the order. This talisman opened all doors, even those in the Despatching-caisson at the foot of the Tower, where they were delivering the sorted Continental mail. The bags were packed close as herrings in the long grey underbodies which our G.P.O. still calls "coaches." Five such coaches were filled as I watched, and were shot up the guides, to be locked on to their waiting packets three hundred feet nearer the stars.

From the Despatching-caisson I was conducted by a courteous and wonderfully learned official—Mr. L. L. Geary, Second Despatcher of the Western Route—to the Captain's Room (this wakes an echo of old romance), where the Mail captains come on for their turn of duty. He introduces me to the captain of 162—Captain Purnall, and his relief, Captain Hodgson. The one is small and dark, the other large and red, but each has the brooding, sheathed glance characteristic of eagles and aeronauts. You can see it in the pictures of our racing professionals, from L. V. Rantsch to little Ada Warleigh—the fathomless abstraction of eyes habitually turned through naked space.

On the notice-board in the Captain's Room the pulsing arrows of some twenty indicators register degree by geographical degree the progress of as many homeward-bound packets. The word "Cape" rises across the face of a dial; a gong strikes: that is all. The South African mid-weekly mail is in at the Highgate Receiving-Towers. It reminds one comically of the traitorous little bell which in pigeon-fanciers' lofts notifies the return of a homer.

"Time for us to be on the move," says

Captain Purnall, and we are shot up by the passenger-lift to the top of the Despatch-towers. Our "coach" will lock on when it is filled, and the clerks are aboard . . .

Number 162 waits for us in Slip E of the topmost stage. The great curve of her back shines frostily under the lights, and some minute alteration of trim makes her rack a little in her holding-down clips.

Captain Purnall frowns and dives inside. Hissing softly, 162 comes to rest level as a rule. From her North Atlantic Winter nose-cap (worn bright as diamond with boring through uncounted leagues of hail, snow, and ice) to the inset of her three built-out propeller-shafts is some two hundred and fifty feet. Her extreme diameter, carried well forward, is thirty-seven. Contrast this with the nine hundred by ninety-four of any crack liner, and you will realise the power that must drive this hull through all weathers at more than twice the emergency speed of the *Cyclonic*.

The eye detects no joint in her skin-plating, save the sweeping hair-crack of the bow rudder—Magniac's rudder, that assured us the dominion of the unstable air, and left its inventor penniless and half-blind. It is calculated to Castelli's "gull-wing" curve. Raise a few feet of that all but invisible plate three-eighths of an inch, and 162 will yaw five miles to port or starboard ere she is under control again. Give her full helm, and she returns on her track like a whiplash. Cant the whole forward—a touch on the wheel will suffice—and she sweeps at your good direction up or down. Open the full circle, and she presents to the air a mushroom head that will bring her up all standing within half the mile.

"Yes," says Captain Hodgson, answering my thought. "Castelli thought that he'd discovered the secret of controlling aeroplanes, when he'd only found out how to steer dirigible balloons. Magniac invented his rudder to help war-boats ram each other; and war went out of fashion, and Magniac he went out of his mind because he said he couldn't serve his country any more. I wonder if any of us ever know what we're really doing."

"If you want to see the coach locked,



"The mate emerges, his arm strapped to his side."

you'd better go aboard. It's due now," says Mr. Geary. I enter 162 through the door amidships. There is nothing here for display. The inner skin of the gas-tanks comes down to within a foot or so of my head, and turns over just short of the turn of the bilges. Liners and yachts disguise their tanks with decoration, but the G.P.O. serves them raw under a lick of grey official paint. The inner skin shuts off fifty feet of the bow and as much of the stern, but the low bulkhead is recessed for the lift-shunting apparatus, as the stern is pierced for the shaft-tunnels. The engine-room lies almost amidships. Forward of it, extending to the turn of the bow-tanks, is an aperture—a bottomless hatch at present—into which the coach will be locked. One looks down over the coamings three hundred feet to the Despatching-caisson, whence voices boom upward. The light below is obscured to a sound of thunder, as the coach rises on its guides. It enlarges rapidly from a postage-stamp to a playing-card; to a punt, and last a pontoon. The two clerks—its crew—do not even look up as it slams into place with a jar that shakes the whole ship. The Quebec letters fly under their fingers and leap into the docketed racks, while both captains and Mr. Geary satisfy themselves that the coach is locked home. Nor perfunctorily nor officially locked, but absolutely and pneumatically one with the glassy-smooth hull. A clerk passes the way-bill over the hatch-coaming; Captain Purnall thumb-marks and passes it to Mr. Geary. Receipt has been given and taken. "Pleasant run," says Mr. Geary, and disappears through a door which a foot-high pneumatic compressor locks after him.

"A—ah," sighs the compressor released. Our holding-down clips part with a tang. We are clear and lifting.

"I beg your pardon," says Captain Hodgson, and slides back a plate discovering the great colloid underbody port-hole through which I watch million-lighted London slide eastward as the westerly gale takes hold of us. The first of the low winter send cuts off the well-known view and darkens Middlesex. On the south edge of it I can see a packet's postal light ploughing through the white fleece. For an instant she gleams like a star ere she drops toward the Highgate Receiving-Towers. "The Bombay mail," says Captain Hodgson, and looks at his watch. "She's forty minutes late."

"What's our level?" I ask.

"Four thousand. Aren't you coming up on the bridge?"

The bridge (let us ever bless the G.P.O. as a repository of ancientest tradition) is represented by a view of Captain Hodgson's legs, where he stands on the control-platform that runs 'thwartships overhead. The bow colloid is unshuttered, and Captain Purnall, one hand on the wheel, is feeling for a fair slant. The dial shows 4,300 feet.

"It's steep to-night?" he mutters, as tier on tier of cloud drops under. "We generally pick up the easterly draught below three thousand at this time o' the year. I hate slathering through fluff."

"So does Van Cutsem. Look at him huntin' for a slant!" says Captain Hodgson. A fog-light breaks cloud a hundred fathoms below. The Antwerp night mail makes her signal and rises between two racing clouds far to port, her flanks blood-red in the glare of Sheerness Double Light. The gale will have us over the German Ocean in half an hour, but Captain Purnall lets her go composedly—nosing to every point of the compass as she rises.

"Five thousand—six, six thousand eight hundred"—the dip-dial reads ere we find the easterly drift, heralded by a flurry of snow at the thousand-fathom level. Captain Purnall rings up the engines, and keys down the governor on the switch before him. There is no sense in urging machinery when Æolus himself will give you good knots for nothing. We are away in earnest now—our nose notched down on our chosen star. At this level the lower clouds are laid out all neatly combed by the dry fingers of the East. Below that there is a strong westerly blow. Overhead, a film of southerly drifting mist draws a theatrical gauze across the firmament. The moonlight striking through turns the lower strata to silver without a stain except where our lean shadow underruns us. Bristol and Cardiff Double Lights (those stately inclined beams over Severnsmouth!) are dead ahead of us, for we keep the Southern route. Coventry Central, the pivot of the English system, stabs upward once in ten seconds its spear of diamond light to the north, and a point or two off our starboard bow The Leek, the great cloud-breaker of Saint David's Head, swings its unmistakable green beam twenty-five degrees each way. There must be half a mile of fluff over it in this weather, but this does not affect The Leek.

"England is overlighted, if anything," says Captain Purnall at the wheel, as Cardiff-Bristol slides under. "I remember the old days of common white verticals that 'ud

show two or three thousand feet up in a mist if you knew where to look for 'em. In really fluffy weather they might as well have been under your hat. One could get lost coming home then and have some fun. *Now* it's like driving down Piccadilly."

He points to the pillars of light where the cloud-breakers bore through the cloud-floor. We see nothing of England's outlines—only a white pavement pierced in all directions by these manholes of variously coloured fire—Holy Island's white and red—St. Bees' interrupted white, and so on as far as the eye can reach. Blessed be Sargent, Ahrens, and the Dubois Brothers who invented the cloud-breakers of the world whereby we travel in security!

"Are you going to lift for The Shamrock?" asks Captain Hodgson. Cork light (green fixed) enlarges as we rush to it. Captain Purnall nods. There is heavy traffic hereabouts—the bank beneath us is streaked with running fissures of flame, where the Atlantic boats are hurrying Londonwards just clear of the fluff. Mail-packets are supposed to have the five-thousand foot lanes and above to themselves, but the foreigner in a hurry is apt to take liberties with English air. 162 lifts to a long-drawn wail of the air in the fore-flange of the rudder, and we make Valencia (white-green-white) at a safe 7,000 feet, dipping our beam to an incoming Washington packet.

There is no cloud on the Atlantic, and faint streaks of cream round Dingle Bay show where the east-driven seas hammer the coast. A big S.A.T.A. liner (*Société Anonyme des Transports Aériens*) is diving and lifting half a mile below us in search of some break in the solid west wind. Lower still lies a Dane in trouble: she is telling the liner all about it in International. Our General Communication dial has caught her talk, and begins to eavesdrop. Captain Hodgson makes a motion to cut it off, but checks himself. "Perhaps you'd like to listen," he says to me.

"*Argol* of St. Thomas," the G.C. whispers. "Report owners three starboard shaft collar-bearings fused. Can make Flores as we are, but impossible further. Shall we buy spares at Fayal?"

The liner acknowledges, and recommends inverting the bearings. The *Argol* answers that she has already done so without effect, and begins to relieve her mind about cheap German enamels for collar-bearings. The Frenchman assents cordially, cries: "*Courage, mon ami!*" and switches off.

Their lights sink under the curve of the world.

"That's one of Lundt and Bleamer's boats," says Captain Hodgson. "Serves 'em right for putting German compos in their thrust-blocks. *She* won't be in Fayal to-night! By the way, wouldn't you like to look round the engine-room?"

I have been waiting eagerly for this invitation, and I follow Captain Hodgson from the control-platform, stooping low to avoid the bulge of the tanks. We know that Fleury's gas can lift anything, as the world-famous trials of '78 showed, but its almost indefinite powers of expansion necessitate vast tank room. Even in this thin air the lift-shunts are busy taking out one-third of its normal lift, and still 162 must be checked by an occasional downdraw of the rudder, or our flight would become a climb to the stars. Captain Purnall prefers an overlifted to an underlifted ship, but no two captains trim ship alike. "When I take the bridge," says Captain Hodgson, "you'll see me shunt forty per cent. of the lift out of the gas and run her on the upper rudder. With a swoop upwards instead of a swoop downwards, *as* you say. Either way will do. It's only habit. Watch our dip-dial. Tim fetches her down once every thirty knots as regularly as breathing."

So it is shown on the dip-dial. For five or six minutes the arrow creeps from 6,700 to 7,300. There is the faint "szgee" of the rudder, and back slides the arrow to 6,500 on a falling slant of ten or fifteen knots.

"In heavy weather you jockey her with the screws as well," says Captain Hodgson, and unclipping the jointed bar which divides the engine-room from the bare deck, he leads me on the floor.

Here we find Fleury's Paradox of the Bulkheaded Vacuum—which we accept now without thought—literally in full blast. The three engines are assisted-vacuo Fleury turbines running from 3,000 to the Limit; that is to say, up to the point when the blades make the air bell—cut out a vacuum for themselves precisely as do overdriven marine propellers. 162's Limit is low on account of the small size of her nine screws, which, though handier than the old colloid Thelussons, bell sooner. The 'midships engine generally used as a reinforce is not running; so the port and starboard turbine vacuum-chambers draw direct into the return-mains.

The turbines whistle reflectively. From the low-arched expansion-tanks on either side the valves descend pillar-wise to the turbine-



"She falls stern-first; slides like a lost soul down that pitiless ladder of light."

chests, and thence the obedient gas whirls through the spirals of set blades with a force that would whip the teeth out of a power-saw. Behind, is its own pressure, held in leash or spurred on by the lift-shunts; before it, the vacuum where Fleury's Ray dances in violet-green bands and whirled tourbillons of flame. The jointed U-tubes of the vacuum-chamber are pressure-tempered colloid (no glass would endure the strain for

an instant), and a junior engineer with tinted spectacles watches the Ray intently. It is the very heart of the machine—a mystery to this day. Even Fleury, who begat it and, unlike Magniac, died a multi-millionaire, could not explain how that restless little imp pirouetting in the U-tube can, in the fractional fraction of a second, strike down the furious blast of gas into a chill greyish-green liquid that drains (you can hear it trickle)

from the far end of the vacuum through the eduction-pipes and the mains back to the bilges. Here it returns to its gaseous—one had almost written sagacious—state and climbs to work afresh. Bilge-tank, upper-tank, dorsal-tank, expansion-chamber, vacuum, main-return (as a liquid) and bilge-tank once more is the ordained cycle. Fleury's Ray sees to that; and the engineer with the tinted spectacles sees to Fleury's Ray. If a speck of oil—if even the natural grease of the human finger touch the hooded terminals, Fleury's Ray will wink and disappear and must be laboriously built up again. This means half-a-day's work for all hands, and an expense of one hundred and seventy odd pounds to the G.P.O. for radium-salts and such trifles.

"Now look at our thrust-collars. You won't find much German compo there. Full-jewelled, you see," says Captain Hodgson, as the engineer shunts open the top of a cap. Our shaft-bearings are C.D.C. (Commercial Diamond Company) stones, ground with as much care as the lenses of a telescope. They cost thirty-seven pounds apiece. So far we have not arrived at their term of life. These bearings are over fifty years old. They came from *No. 97*, which took them over from the old *Dominion of Light*, which had them out of the wreck of the *Perseus* aeroplane in the years when men still flew tin kites over Thorium engines.

They are a shining reproof to all low-grade German "ruby" enamels, so-called "boort" facings, and the dangerous and unsatisfactory alumina compounds which please dividend-hunting owners and turn skippers crazy.

The rudder-gear and the gas lift-shunt, seated side by side under the engine-room dials, are the only machines in visible motion. The former sighs from time to time as the oil-plunger rises and falls half an inch. The latter, cased and guarded like the U-tube aft, exhibits another Fleury Ray, but inverted and more green than violet. Its function is to shunt the lift out of the gas, and this it will do without watching. That is all! One tiny pump-rod wheezing and whining to itself beside a sputtering green lamp. A hundred and fifty feet aft, down the flat-topped tunnel of the tanks, a violet light restless and irresolute. Between the two, three white-painted turbine-trunks, like eel-baskets laid on their side, accentuate the empty perspectives. You can hear the trickle of the liquefied gas flowing from the vacuum into the bilge-tanks, and the soft *gluck-gluck* of gas-locks closing as Captain Purnall brings

162 down by the head. The hum of the turbines and the boom of the air on our skin is no more than a cotton-wool wrapping to the universal stillness. And we are running an eighteen-second mile.

I peer from the fore-end of the engine-room over the hatch-coamings into the coach. The mail-clerks are sorting the Winnipeg Calgary and Medicine Hat bags: but there is a pack of cards ready on the table.

Suddenly a bell thrills; the engineers at the turbine-valves stand by; but the spectacled slave of the Ray in the U-tube never lifts his head. He must watch where he is. We are hard-braked and going astern; and there is high language from the control-platform.

"Tim's temper has fused on something," says the unruffled Captain Hodgson. "Let's look."

Captain Purnall is not the man we left half an hour ago, but the embodied authority of the G.P.O. Ahead of us floats an ancient aluminium-patched, twin-screw tramp of the dingiest, with no more right to the 5,000-foot lanes than has a horse-cart to London. She carries an obsolete "barbette" conning-tower—a six-foot affair with railed platform forward, and our warning beam plays on the top of it as a policeman's lantern flashes on the area-sneak. Like a sneak-thief, too, emerges a shock-headed navigator in his shirt-sleeves. Captain Purnall wrenches open the colloid to talk with him man to man. There are times when science does not satisfy.

"What under the stars are you doing here, you sky-scraper chimney-sweep?" he shouts as we two drift side by side. "Do you know this is a Mail lane? You call yourself a skipper, sir? You ain't fit to paddle toy aeroplanes in the Strand. Your name and number! Report and get down!"

"I've been blown up once," the shock-headed man cries hoarsely as a dog barking under the stars. "I don't care two flips of a contact for anything *you* can do, Postey."

"Don't you, sir? But I'll make you care. I'll have your stinking gasogene towed stern first to Disko and broke up. You can't recover insurance if you're broke for obstruction. Do you understand *that*?"

Then the stranger bellows: "Look at my propellers! There's been a wullie-wa down under that has blown me into umbrella-frames! We're leakin'! We're all one conjurer's watch inside! My mate's arm's broke; my engineer's head's cut open; my Ray went out when the engines smashed; and—and—"

for pity's sake give me my height, Captain! We doubt we're dropping."

"Six thousand eight hundred. Can you hold it?" Captain Purnall overlooks all insults, and leans half out of the colloid, staring and sniffing. The stranger leaks pungently. He calls—

"We ought to blow back to St. John's with luck. We're trying to plug the fore-tank now, but she's simply whistlin' it away."

"She's sinkin' like a log," says Captain Purnall in an undertone. "Call up the Mark Boat, George." Our dip-dial shows that we abreast the tramp have dropped five hundred feet the last few minutes. Captain Purnall presses a switch, and our signal-beam swings through the night, twizzling spokes of light across infinity.

"That'll fetch something," he says, while Captain Hodgson watches the General Communicator. He has called up the Banks Mark Boat a few hundred miles west, and is reporting.

"I'll stand by you!" Captain Purnall roars to the lone figure on the conning-tower.

"Is it as bad as that?" comes the answer. "She isn't insured."

"Might have guessed as much," mutters Hodgson. "Owner's risk is the worst risk of all!"

"Can't I fetch St. John's—not even with this breeze?" the voice quavers.

"Stand by to abandon ship! Haven't you any lift in you, fore or aft?"

"Nothing but the 'midships tanks, and they're none too tight. You see, my Ray gave out and——" he coughs in the reek of the escaping gas.

"You poor devil!" This does not reach our friend. "What does the Mark Boat say, George?"

"Wants to know if there's any danger to traffic. Says she's in a bit of weather herself and can't quit station. I've turned in a General Call, so even if they don't see our beam, someone's bound to—or else we must. Shall I clear our slings? Hold on! Here we are! A Planet liner, too! She'll be up in a tick!"

"Tell her to get her slings ready," cries his brother Captain. "There won't be much time to spare . . . Tie up your mate!" he roars to the tramp.

"My mate's all right. It's my engineer. He's gone crazy."

"Shunt the lift out of him with a spanner. Hurry!"

"But I can make land—if I've half a chance."

"You'll make the deep Atlantic in twenty minutes. You're less than fifty-four hundred now. Get your log and papers."

A Planet liner—east bound—heaves up in a superb spiral and takes the air of us humming. Her underbody colloid is open, and her transporter-slugs hang down like tentacles. We shut off our beam as she adjusts herself—steering to a hair—over the tramp's conning-tower. The mate emerges, his arm strapped to his side, and stumbles into the cradle. A man with a ghastly scarlet head follows, shouting that he must go back and build up his Ray. The mate assures him that he will find a nice new Ray all ready in the liner's engine-room. The bandaged head goes up wagging excitedly. A youth and a woman follow. The liner cheers hollowly above us, and we see the passengers' faces at the saloon colloid.

"That's a good girl. What's the fool waiting for now?" says Captain Purnall.

The skipper comes up still appealing to us to stand by and see him fetch St. John's. He dives below and returns—at which we little human beings in the void cheer louder than ever—with the ship's kitten. Up fly the liner's hissing slings; her underbody crashes home and she hurtles away again. Our dial shows less than 3,000 feet.

The Mark Boat signals that we must attend to the derelict, now whistling her death-song as she falls beneath us in long, sick zigzags.

"Keep our beam on her and send out a general warning," says Captain Purnall, following her down.

There is no need. Not a liner in air but knows the meaning of that vertical beam, and gives us and our quarry a wide berth.

"But she'll drown in the water, won't she?" I asked of Tim.

"I've known a derelict up-end and sift her engines out of herself, and flicker round the Lower Lanes for three weeks on her forward tanks only. We'll run no risks. Pith her, George, and look sharp. There's weather ahead."

Captain Hodgson opens the underbody colloid, swings the heavy pithing-iron out of its rack which, in liners, is generally cased as a settee, and at two hundred feet releases the catch. We hear the whirr of the crescent-shaped arms opening as they descend. The derelict's forehead is punched in, starred across, and rent diagonally. She falls stern-first, our beam upon her; slides like a lost soul down that pitiless ladder of light, and the Atlantic takes her.

"A filthy business," says Hodgson. "I



"The Mark Boat hangs herself up in her appointed place in the skies."

wonder what it must have been like in the old days."

The thought had crossed my mind too. What if that wavering carcass had been filled with international-speaking men of all the Internationalities, each of them taught (*that* is the horror of it) that after death he would very possibly go for ever to unspeakable torment? And not a century since we (one knows now that we are only our fathers re-enlarged upon the earth) — *we*, I say, ripped and rammed and pithed to admiration.

Here Tim, from the control-platform, shouts that we are to get into our inflators and to bring him his at once.

We hurry into the heavy rubber suits—the engineers are already half-dressed—and inflate at the air-pump taps. G.P.O. inflators are thrice as thick as a racing man's "heavies," and chafe abominably under the arm-pits. George takes the wheel until Tim has blown himself up to the extreme of rotundity. If you kicked him off the c.p. to the deck, he would bounce back. But it is 162 that will do the kicking to-night.

"The Mark Boat's mad — stark ravin' crazy," Tim snorts, returning to command. "She says there's a bad blow-out ahead, and wants me to pull over to Greenland. I'll see her pithed first! We've wasted an hour and a quarter over that dead bird down under, and now I'm expected to go rubbin' my back all the Pole round! What does she think a postal packet's made of. Gummed silk? Tell her we're comin' on straight."

George buckles him into the Frame and switches on the Direct Control. Now, under Tim's left toe, lies the port-engine accelerator; under his left heel the reverse, and so with the other foot. The lift-shunt stops stand out on the rim of the steering-wheel, where the fingers of his left hand can play on them. At his right hand is the 'midships engine-lever, ready to be thrown into gear at a moment's notice. He leans forward in his belt, eyes glued to the bow-colloid, and one ear cocked toward the General Communicator. Henceforth he is the strength and direction of 162, through whatever may befall.

The Banks Mark Boat is reeling out pages of Aerial Route Directions to the traffic at large. We are to "secure all loose objects," hood up our Fleury Rays; and on no account to attempt to clear snow from our cunnings-towers till the weather abates. Under-powered craft can ascend to the limit of their lift, mail-packets to look out for them accordingly: the traffic lanes are pitting very badly with frequent blow-outs, vortices, and

laterals. In other words, we are in for a storm with electric trimmings.

Still the clear dark holds up unblemished. The only warning is the electric skin-tension (I feel as though I were a lace-maker's pillow), and an intense irritability which the gibbering of the General Communicator increases almost to hysteria.

We have risen eight thousand feet since we pithed the tramp, and our turbines are giving us an honest two hundred an hour.

Very far to the west an elongated blur of light low down shows us the Banks Mark Boat. There are specks of fire round her rising and falling—bewildered planets about an unstable sun—helpless shipping hanging on to her light for company's sake. No wonder she could not quit station.

She warns us to look out for the backwash of the bad vortex in which (her beam shows it) she is even now reeling.

The pits of gloom about us begin to fill with very faintly luminous films—wreathing and uneasy shapes. One forms itself into a globe of pale flame that waits shivering with eagerness as we sweep by. It leaps monstrously across the blackness, alights on the precise tip of our nose, grimaces there an instant, and swings off. Our roaring bow sinks as though that light were lead—sinks and recovers to lurch and stumble again beneath the next blow-out. Tim's fingers on the lift-shunt strike chords of numbers: 1.4.7; 2.4.6; 7.5.3; and so on; for he is running by his tanks only, lifting and dropping her by instinct. All three engines are at work; the sooner we have skated over this thin ice, the better. Higher we dare not go. The whole upper vault is charged with pale Krypton vapours, which our skin-friction may excite to unholy manifestations. Between the upper and the lower levels—5,000 and 7,000 hints the Mark Boat—we may perhaps bolt through if

Our bow clothes itself in blue flame and falls like a sword. No human skill can keep pace with the changing tensions. A vortex has us by the beak, and we dive down a two-thousand foot slant at an angle (the dip-dial and my bouncing body record it) of thirty-five. Our turbines scream shrilly; the propellers cannot bite on the wild air; Tim shunts the lift out of five tanks at once, and by sheer weight drives her bulletwise through the maelstrom till she cushions with a jar of the brake three thousand feet below.

"*Now* we've done it," says George in my ear. "Our skin-friction that last slide has

played Old Harry with the tensions! Look out for laterals, Tim."

"I've got her," is the answer. "Come up, you crazy old kite!"

She comes up nobly, but the laterals buffet her left and right like the pinions of angry angels. She is jolted off her chosen star twenty degrees port or starboard, and cuffed into place again, only to be swung away and dropped into a new blow-out. We are never without a corposant grinning on our bows or rolling head over heels from nose to 'midships; and to the crackle of electricity round and within us is added once or twice the rattle of hail—hail that will never fall on any sea. Slow we must, or we shall break our back, pitch-poling.

"Air's a perfectly elastic fluid!" roars George above the tumult. "Elastic as a head sea off the Fastnet!"

He is less than just to the good element. If one intrudes on the heavens when they are balancing their volt-accounts; if one disturbs the High Gods' market-rates by hurling steel hulls at ninety knots across tremblingly adjusted tensions, one must not complain of any rudeness in the reception. Tim met it with an unmoved countenance, a corner of his under-lip caught up on a tooth, his eyes fleeting into the blackness twenty miles ahead, and the fierce sparks flying from his knuckles at every play of the hand. Now and again he shook his head to clear the sweat trickling through his eyebrows, and it was then that George, watching his chance, would slide down the life-rail and swab his face quickly with a big red handkerchief. I never imagined that a human being could so continuously labour and so collectedly think, as did Tim through that Hell's half-hour when the flurry was at its worst. We were dragged hither and yon by warm or frozen suction, belched up on the tops of wullie-was, spun down by vortices, and clubbed aside by laterals under a dizzying rush of stars, in the company of a drunken moon. I heard the swishing click of the 'midships engine-lever sliding in and out, the low growl of the lift-shunts, and, louder than the yelling winds without, the scream of the bow-rudder gouging into any lull that promised hold even for an instant. At last we began to claw up on a cant, bow-rudder and port-propeller together: only the nicest balancing of our lift saved us from spinning like the rifle-bullet of the old days.

"We've got to hitch to windward of the Mark Boat somehow," George cried.

"There's no windward," I protested feebly

where I swung shackled to a stanchion. "How can there be?"

He laughed—as we pitched into a thousand-foot blow-out—that red man laughed under his inflated hood.

"Look!" he said. "We must clear those refugees, anyhow."

The Mark Boat was below, and a little to the sou'-west of us, fluctuating in the centre of her distraught galaxy. The air was thick with moving lights at every level. I take it most of them were lying head to wind, but, not being hydras, they failed. An undertanked Moghrabi boat had risen to the limit of her lift, and finding no improvement, had dropped a couple of thousand. There she met a superb wullie-wa and was blown up spinning like a dead leaf. Instead of shutting off, she braked hard, and naturally rebounded as from a wall almost into the Mark Boat, whose language (our G.C. took it all in) was humanly simple.

"If they'd only ride it out quietly, it 'ud be better," said George in a calm, as we climbed like a bat above them all. "But some skippers *will* navigate without power. What does that Tad-boat think she is doing, Tim?"

"Playin' kiss in the ring," was Tim's unmoved reply. A Trans-Asiatic Direct Liner had found a smooth, and butted into it full power. But there was a vortex at the tail of that smooth, and the T.A.D. was flipped out like a paper boomerang, braking madly as she fled down, and all but over-ending.

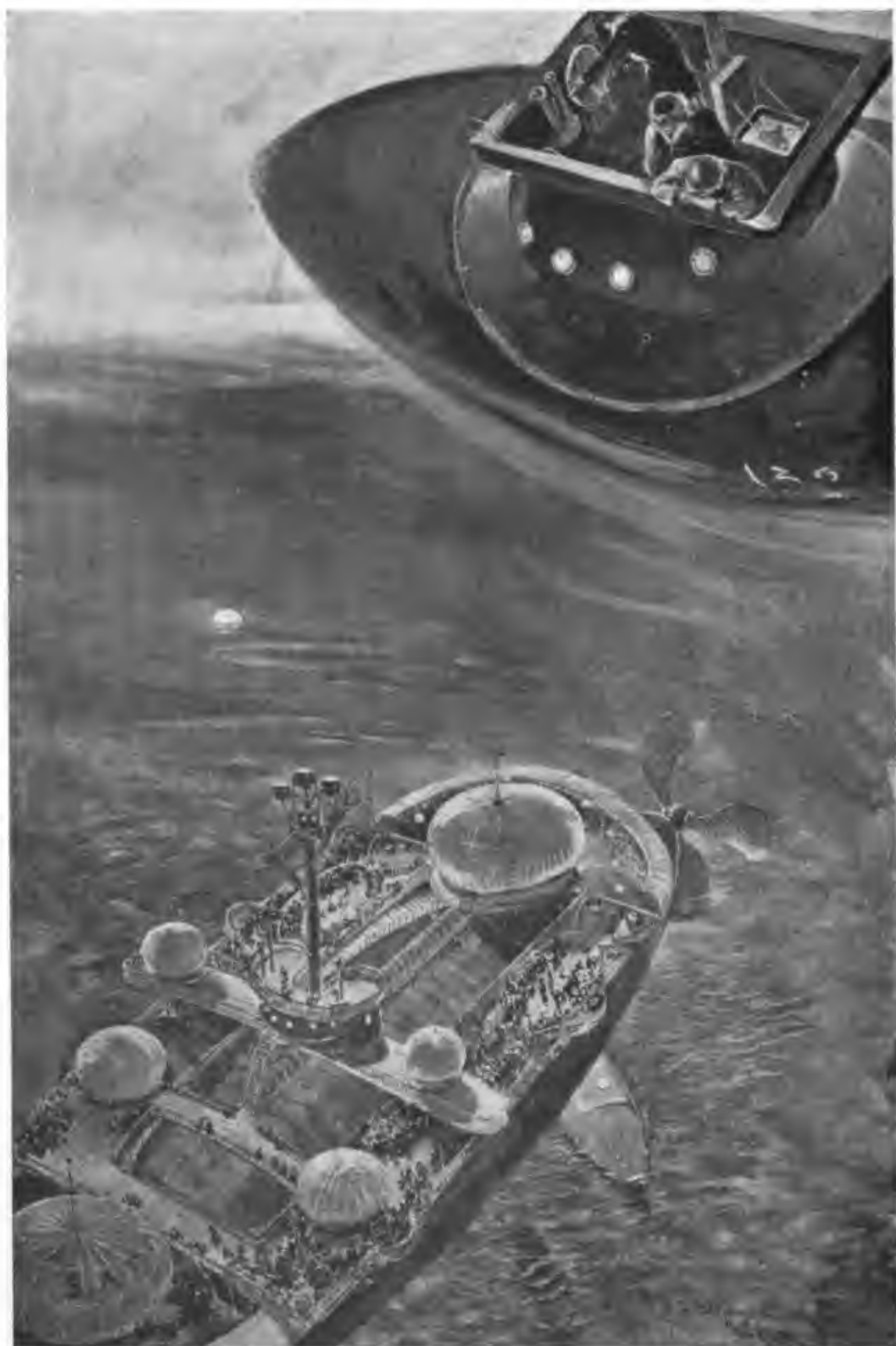
"Now I hope she's satisfied," said Tim. "If she'd met a lateral, she'd have poked up under us or thereabouts. I'm glad I'm not a Mark Boat . . . Do I want help?" The whispering G.C. dial had caught his ear. "George, you may tell that gentleman, with my love—love, remember, George—that I do not want help. Who is the officious sardinetin?"

"Rimouski drogher on the look out for a tow."

"Very kind of the Rimouski drogher—but this postal packet isn't being towed at present."

"Those droghers will go anywhere on a chance of salvage," George explained. "We call 'em kittiwakes."

A long-beaked, bright steel ninety-footer floated at ease, for one instant within hail of us, her slings coiled ready for rescues, and a single hand in her open tower. He was smoking. Surrendered to the insurrection of the airs through which we tore our way, he lay in absolute peace. I saw the smoke of his



"She passed slowly beneath us, heading northward."

pipe ascend untroubled ere his boat dropped under like a stone in a well.

We had just cleared the Mark Boat and her disorderly chickens, when the storm ended as suddenly as it had begun. A shooting star to northward filled the sky with the green blink of a meteorite dissipating itself in our atmosphere.

Said George: "This may iron out all the tensions." Even as he spoke, the conflicting winds came to rest; the levels filled; the laterals died out in long, easy sighs; the airways were smoothed before us. In less than three minutes the covey round the Mark Boat had shipped their power-lights and whirled away upon their businesses.

"What's happened?" I gasped. The nerve-storm within and the volt-tingle without had passed; my inflators weighed like lead.

"God He knows," said Captain George soberly. "That old shooting-star's friction has discharged the different levels. I've seen it happen before. Phew! What a relief!"

We dropped from twelve to six thousand, and got rid of our clammy suits. Tim shut off and stepped out of the Frame. The Mark Boat was coming up behind us. He opened the colloid in that heavenly stillness and mopped his face.

"Hello, Williams!" he cried. "A degree or two out o' station, ain't you?"

"Maybe," was the slow answer. "I've had some company this evening."

"So I noticed. Wasn't that quite a little flurry?"

"I warned you. Why didn't you pull out round by Disko? The East-bound packets have."

"Me? Not till I'm running a Polar Consumptives Sanatorium Boat! I was squinting out of a colloid before you were out of your cradle, my son."

"I'd be the last man to deny it," the captain of the Mark Boat replied softly. "The way you handled her just now—I'm a pretty fair judge of traffic in a volt-flurry—it was a thousand revolutions beyond anything even I've ever seen."

Tim's back supples visibly under this oiling. Captain George on the c.p. winks and points to the portrait of a singularly attractive maiden pinned up on Tim's telescope-bracket above the steering-wheel. She is Tim's daughter.

I see. Wholly and entirely do I see.

There is some talk overhead of "coming round to tea on Friday," a brief report of the derelict's fate, and Tim volunteers, as

he descends: "For an A.B.C. man, young Williams is less of a high-tension fool than some Were you thinking of taking her, George? Then I'll just have a look round that port thrust—seems to me it's a trifle warm—and we'll fan along."

The Mark Boat hums off joyously and hangs herself up in her appointed place in the skies. Here she will stay, a shutterless observatory; a lifeboat station; a salvage tug; a court of ultimate appeal-cum-meteorological bureau for a thousand miles round in all directions till Wednesday next, when her relief slides across the stars to take her buffeted place. Her black hull, double conning-tower, and ever-ready slings represent all that remains to this planet of effective authority. She is responsible only to the Aerial Board of Control—the A.B.C. of which Tim speaks so flippantly. But that semi-elected, semi-nominated body of a few score persons of both sexes governs this planet. "Transportation is civilisation," our motto runs. Theoretically we do what we please so long as we do not interfere with the traffic *and all it implies*. Practically, the A.B.C. confirms or annuls most international arrangements, and, to judge by its last report, finds our tolerant, humorous, lazy little planet only too ready to lay the whole burden of private administration on its shoulder.

I discuss this with Tim sipping *maté* on the c.p., while George fans her along over the white blur of the Newfoundland Banks in beautiful upward curves of fifty miles each. The dip-dial translates them on the tape in flowing freehand.

Tim gathers up a skein of it and surveys the last few feet which record 162's path through the volt-flurry.

"I haven't had a fever-chart like this to show up in five years," he says ruefully.

A postal-packet's dip-dial records every yard of every run. The tapes then go to the A.B.C., which collates them and makes composite photographs of them for the instruction of skippers. Tim studies his irrevocable past shaking his head.

"Hullo! Here's a fifteen-hundred-foot drop at eighty-five degrees! We must have been standing on our head then, George."

"You don't say so," George answers. "I fancied I noticed a bit of a duck."

George may not have Captain Purnall's catlike swiftness, but he is an artist to the tips of the broad fingers that play on the shunt-stops. The delicious flight-curves come away on the tape with never a waver. The Mark Boat's vertical spindle of light

lies down to eastward setting in the face of the following stars. Westward, where no planet should rise, the triple white verticals of Trinity Bay (we keep still to the Southern route) makes a low-lifting haze. We seem the only things at rest under all the heavens: floating at ease till earth's revolution shall turn up our landing-towers.

And minute by minute our silent clock shows us a sixteen-second mile.

"Some fine night," says Tim, "we'll be even with that clock's master."

"He's coming now," says George. "I'm chasing the night already."

The stars ahead dim no more than if a film of mist had been drawn under unobserved, but the deep air-boom on our skin changes to a joyful shout.

"The dawn-gust," says Tim. "It'll go on to meet the sun. Look! Look! There's the night being crammed back over our bow! Come to the after-colloid. I'll show you something pretty."

The engine-room is hot and stuffy: the clerks in the coach are asleep, and the Slave of the Ray is near to follow them. Tim slides open the after-colloid and reveals the curve of the world—the ocean's deepest purple—edged with fuming and intolerable gold. Then the sun rises and, through the colloid, strikes out our lamps. Tim scowls in his face.

"Squirrels in a cage," he mutters. "That's all we are. Squirrels in a cage! He's running twice as fast as us. . . . Just you wait a few years, my shining friend, and we'll take steps that will amaze you. We'll Joshua you!"

Yes; that is our dream—to turn all earth to the Vale of Ajalon at our pleasure. So far we can drag out the dawn to twice its normal length in these latitudes. But some day—even on the Equator—we shall hold the sun level in his full stride!

Now we look down on a sea thronged with heavy traffic. A big submersible breaks water suddenly. Another and another follows with a swash and a suck and a savage bubbling of relieved pressures. The deep-sea freighters are rising to lung up after the long night, and the leisurely ocean is all patterned with peacock's eyes of foam.

"We'll lung up, too," says Tim, and when we return to the c.p., George shuts off, the colloids are opened, and the fresh air sweeps her out. There is no hurry. The old contracts (they will be revised at the end of this year) allow twelve hours for a run which any packet can put behind her in ten. We

breakfast in the arms of an easterly slant which pushes us along at a languid twenty.

To enjoy life, and tobacco, begin both on a sunny morning half a mile or so above the dappled Atlantic cloud-belts, and after a volt-flurry which has cleared and tempered your nerves. While we discussed the thickening traffic with the superiority that comes of having a high level to ourselves, we heard (and I for the first time) morning service on a Hospital boat.

She was cloaked by a skein of ravelled fluff beneath us, and we caught her chant before she rose into the sunlight: "*O ye Winds of God,*" sang the unseen voices, "*bless ye the Lord! Praise Him, and magnify Him for ever!*"

We slid off our caps and joined in. When our shadow fell across her great open platforms, they looked up and stretched out their hands neighbourly while they sang. We could see the doctors and the nurses and the white-button-like faces of the cot-patients. She passed slowly beneath us, heading northward, her hull, wet with the dews of night, all ablaze in the sunshine. So took she the shadow of a cloud and vanished; her song continuing—

"*O ye holy and humble men of heart, bless ye the Lord! Praise Him, and magnify Him for ever!*"

"She's a lunger, or she wouldn't have been singing the *Benedicite*; and she's a Greenlander, or she wouldn't have snow-blinds over her colloids," said George at last. "She'll be bound for Frederikshavn or one of the Glacier sanatoriums for a month. If she was an accident ward, she'd be hung up at the ten-thousand-foot level. Yes—consumptives."

"Funny how the new things are the old things. I've read in books," Tim answered, "that savages used to haul their sick and wounded to the tops of the hills because microbes were fewer there. We hoist 'em into sterilised air for a while. Same thing, isn't it?"

"Did you ever read about the epidemics we used to have in the old days—right on the ground?" said George, knocking out his pipe. "It must have been bad. And we talked about Fresh Air, too! Fresh air—in a city—with horses and cows and pigs and rats and people in direct contact! I wonder we didn't all die twice a week. We must have been an enamel-faced community."

"Dunno—we died at seventy or thereabouts (I've read), and a centenarian was a curio in those days. How much do the



"On the upper staging a little hooded figure stretched arms wide towards her father."

doctors say we've added to the average life of a man?"

"Thirty years," says George, with a twinkle in his eye. "Are you going to spend 'em all up here, Tim? Our letters'll be a trifle discharged."

"Flap along, then. Flap along. Who's hindering?" The senior captain laughed, as we went in.

We held a good lift to clear the coast and Continental shipping, and we had need of it. Though our route is in no sense a populated one, there is a steady trickle of traffic this way about. We met Hudson Bay furriers out of the Great Preserve hurrying to make their departures from Bonavista with sable and black fox for the insatiable markets; we over-crossed Keewahdin liners small and cramped; but their captains, who see no land between Trepassy and Blanco, know what gold they bring back from West Africa. Trans-Asiatic Directs we met soberly ringing the world round the Fiftieth Meridian, at an honest seventy knots; and white-painted Ackroyd and Hunt fruiterers out of the South fled beneath us, their ventilated hulls whistling like Chinese kites. Their market is in the North, among the northern sanatoria, where you can smell their grape-fruit and bananas across the cold snows. Brazilian beef-boats we sighted of enormous capacity and Teutonic outline. They too feed the Northern health-stations in ice-bound ports where submersibles dare not rise. Yellow-bellied ore-flats and Ungava petrol-tanks punted down leisurely out of the North like strings of unfrightened wild-duck. It does not pay to "fly" minerals and oil a mile further than is necessary; but the risks of transshipping to submersibles in the ice-pack off Nain or Hebron are so great that these heavy freighters fly down to Halifax direct, and scent the air as they go. They are the biggest tramps aloft, except the Athabasca grain-tubs. But these, now that the wheat is moved, are busy over the planet's left shoulder, timber-lifting in Siberia.

We held to the St. Lawrence (it is astonishing how the old waterways still pull

us children of the air!) and followed his broad line of black between its drifting ice-blocks, all down the Park that the wisdom of our fathers has saved to the world.

But everyone knows the Quebec run.

We dropped to the Heights Receiving-Towers twenty minutes ahead of time, and there hung at ease till the Yokohama Intermediate Packet could pull out and give us our proper slip. It was curious to watch the action of the holding-down-clips all along the frosty river front as boats cleared or came to rest. A big Hamburger was leaving Pont Levis, and her crew, unshipping the platform railings, began to sing "Elsinore"—the oldest of our chanteys. You know it, of course?

Mother Rugen's tea-house on the Baltic—
Forty couple waltzing on the floor!
And you can mind my Ray,
For I must go away
And dance with Ella Sweyn at Elsinore!

Then, while they sweated home the covering-plate:

Nor—Nor—Nor—Nor—
West from Sourabaya to the Baltic—
Ninety knot an hour to the Skaw!
Mother Rugen's tea-house on the Baltic,
And a dance with Ella Sweyn at Elsinore!

The clips parted with a gesture of indignant dismissal, as though Quebec, glittering under her snows, were casting out these light and unworthy lovers. Our signal came from the Heights. Tim turned and floated up, but surely it was with passionate appeal that the great arms flung open from our tower—or did I think so because on the upper staging a little hooded figure also stretched arms wide towards her father?

* * * *

In ten seconds the coach with its clerks clashed down to the Receiving-caissons; the hostlers displaced the engineers at the cold turbines, and Tim, prouder of this than all, introduced me to the maiden of the photograph on the shelf. "And by the way," said he, stepping forth in the sunshine under the hat of civil life, "I saw young Williams in the Mark Boat. I've asked him to tea on Friday."



WINKIBOO.

By LAURENCE HOUSMAN.



VERY day, at the same hour in the morning, Winkiboo saluted his mother honourably, and set out from his poor hovel of a home on his road to school. There was nothing in life that he less liked doing than that; and this not because he was indolent, but because he was heavy of understanding; his skull was thick, and his brain small and difficult to get at, so learning came hard to him.

And as he went each day along the path by the rice-fields, and across the small channels, thick with fennel and burdock, which carried water into all the surrounding country, he would repeat to himself the lessons he had to get ready—the spelling and the tables and the pieces of verse, conning them from the rough clay tablets that hung round his neck; but however often he repeated them, it was no good at all: when he came into school and tried to remember them, he would find he had forgotten them all.

There was no doubt at all that he was the greatest dunce in the school. Almost on all days the schoolmaster would beat him, trying to put a little sense into his head, but it was not the least good; even the smallest of the scholars would jeer and point at him because he was such a dunce.

They would do that not only in school, but out of school as well. Those who overtook him on the way, with their own lessons well learned and packed safe inside their self-satisfied little brains, would come round and laugh and interrupt his tardy efforts to master the task he had been set. "It is no use," they would cry; "why does Winkiboo try to learn when he knows he must be whipped?"

Thus they gave him smaller chance than ever to escape the flogging they wished him.

It was very amusing to see, however hard he might try, how sure he was not to escape a beating in one day out of two.

And the worst of it was that Winkiboo really wished to learn; so when his school-fellows began regularly to hinder him, he took to going another way by a much worse road, which led through a tangled bit of wood wherein stood an old ruined temple with the statue of Buddha, the calm, peaceable god, still seated in its shade, though no worshipper ever came near it now. "After all," thought he, "being a longer road, it will give me more time than I get by the other way."

At first Winkiboo was a little afraid when he came within the shadow of the wood, for the place was very overgrown and lonely; but before long he had got used to it, and would look up as he went by, to see the god always sitting there with empty hands and the same quiet smile upon his face, not seeming to care what went on round him, or, for the matter of that, for what no longer went on.

In a little while, Winkiboo came to have quite a friendly feeling for the lonely deity sitting in a shrine that had fallen out of fashion; so on his way he would pull flowers, and as he went by he would stand on tip-toe and drop them into the god's lap as a remembrance. But he could never tell if the god cared at all for such things now, for his face wore always that same smile of a mind given not to the outward things of the world, but inwardly to the things of the spirit. Winkiboo did not doubt that inside his black marble covering the god was very wise and knew many things that the rest of the world had forgotten long ago. There, then, was one who was far more wise than any schoolmaster; and yet he always looked kindly and never seemed to upbraid.

Winkiboo soon came very much to prefer going by the longer and lonelier way, till at last his school-fellows, never meeting him, would wonder what had become of him and how it was that he got to school at all. But though they questioned him, Winkiboo seemed to be dense, and would not say anything.

Now, there was something strange about



"He would stand on tip-toe and drop them into the god's lap."

Winkiboo's mind, for all that it was so slow at learning; it wasn't cleverness in the least, but it was a sort of hope that lived there and never quite died. Every morning, when he set out with his tablets to school, he could imagine that just for once he was going to get his lesson quite off by heart; and though the hope had failed him hundreds of times before, it was always the same again

next morning, never any more and never any less. And always when he got as far as the ruined shrine, with the calm figure of the god seated within, holding its peace so wisely at all the world, always then Winkiboo would think that he knew his lesson better than he had ever done before, and would look up cheerfully and nod his head and cry: "O Thou!" as he threw up flowers to the god's

knees before passing on his way. And while he did this he never remembered how the day before, and the day before that, and again the day before that, he had had quite the same idea, and yet had not received one stroke the less when the event proved him as much a dunce as ever.

But one day when Winkiboo was starting on his road to school, carrying his clay tablets with him, he saw in the water-channel by the way some yellow irises, which seemed to him more beautiful than any he had yet taken to offer at the shrine; and as he stayed and reached over the stream to get them, suddenly the string that was about his neck snapped, and the three clay tablets that hung there fell off into the water and were drowned.

All his hope was gone.

Winkiboo had no heart to pick more than a single flower, for he knew for certain that none of his lessons would be learned that morning, and that his master would be sure to beat him worse than ever he had done before. He went on his way weeping.

And when he came to the shrine, he reached up his hand and laid the yellow iris between the smooth, black knees of the statue, saying nothing, because his heart was so heavy and had no hope left in it.

Then he turned to go on, when far up over his head he heard a soft, slow voice saying: "O thou!" It was the statue speaking to him. Winkiboo stood still as the rivet in a dead man's coffin, wondering with his slow mind what next. "O thou!" said the voice again, "what is it ails thee to-day?"

Winkiboo smudged the half-dried tears out of his eyes to make room for fresh ones, and began sobbing once more. "Getting this flower for you," he said, "I dropped my tablets into the stream; so now, as I can't learn my lessons, I know I shall be beaten!"

He was about to start sobbing louder than ever, when he heard the statue overhead say: "Oh, no, you won't be."

"Won't I? Why not?" asked Winkiboo, still doubtful of the matter.

"Climb up on to my knee," said the statue, "and I will show you."

Winkiboo climbed up with some difficulty, and when he had got so far safely, there among the dried stalks of all the flowers he had brought on previous days, he saw three little clay tablets lying. He looked at them, and there was no doubt about it—they contained the words and the numbers and

the verses which he ought to have been getting by heart that morning.

"Sit where you are," said the statue, for Winkiboo was just going to snatch up the tablets and slip off again. "Sit where you are and read them once through; then I will let you go."

So Winkiboo sat between the statue's knees and read the tablets once through. And no sooner had he done that than he found he knew them all by heart, forwards and backwards, and inside out and upside down, and all ways imaginable. He was almost frightened to find himself possessing so much knowledge. "O Thou!" he cried in a great hurry, and slipping off the statue's knee, ran off as hard as he could to catch up the time that he had been losing.

In school that day, Winkiboo stood up unabashed and repeated his lesson without missing a word. The schoolmaster could not believe his ears: he thought there must be some trick about it, and tried to catch him tripping, by all the means that a schoolmaster knows so well. But Winkiboo tripped like a dewdrop on a blade of grass, or water on a duck's back, and rolled it out backwards and forwards, upside down and inside out, with the ease of the nightingale when he is love-making. The whole school became silent with envy, dudgeon, and astonishment.

Winkiboo ran all the way home; and when he got there, he sat down on the doorstep and cried because he was so happy. The way to learn his lessons had been revealed to him at last; and how easy it was!—simply to sit in the lap of an ancient and a wise god, whom other folks had forgotten, and at once the whole thing came like Nature.

The next day, when he set out to school, he took with him a large bunch of yellow irises in grateful offering to his benefactor; and when he stood up in class, he said his lesson just as well as he had done the day before, inside out and upside down and hind before, without missing a word.

The big, clever, lazy, fat top boy of the school, whose name was Boh-boh, which means chief, and who could only say his lessons in the ordinary, straightforward way, grew ill with envy to hear him. And as soon as school was over, he got hold of Winkiboo and said to him: "Tell me what it is you have done to make yourself so clever all of a sudden. If you do not tell me, I will do something that will make you wish yourself dead."

Winkiboo did not want to tell him at all. So what he said was this: "Take three hairs

"Winkiboo had no heart to pick more than a single flower."



day he came to school looking very ill indeed. He did not know his lessons nearly so well as he ought to have done; Winkiboo surpassed him easily.

After school, Boh-boh said to Winkiboo: "Why did you tell me those things would make me wiser? They have only made me feel very ill."

"In that case," said Winkiboo, "they *have* made you wiser, because now you know they are not good for eating; you would have known that before had you only been wiser."

When he heard that, Boh-boh became very angry and threatened to do all manner of things to Winkiboo if he would not tell him the true way to become wiser and learn everything just as he now did.

"Well," said Winkiboo, "the way to make yourself really wiser is this. Get a flea that has bitten a dog, that has bitten a cat, that has bitten a rat, that has bitten a mouse, that has bitten a piece of cheese that you have bitten; and when you have been bitten by that flea, then your mind will go round and round in circles, and you will be wiser than you have ever been in your life before."

The next day when Boh-boh came to school, he was so exhausted he could hardly creep or sit up; he did worse than ever at his lessons, and by the time they were over,

out of a cow's tail, and three quills off a hedgehog's back, and three bones out of a lizard's spine, and swallow them; and when you have swallowed them, you will be wiser than you are now."

Boh-boh believed him easily, and the next

where before he had been at the top, he now found himself at the bottom.

So when school was over, Winkiboo, who was beginning to feel quite sorry for him, said: "Did you catch that flea?"

"Yes," said Boh-boh, "and much good has it done me! It took a lot of catching."

"Of course," said Winkiboo; "I could have told you that yesterday. And didn't the doing of it make you feel giddy?"

"Giddy!" cried Boh-Boh. "Why, my brain has been going round in circles ever since!"

"That is just what I told you would happen," said Winkiboo. "Don't you feel wiser now than you have ever done before?"

Then Boh-boh became greatly enraged, and he caught little Winkiboo up by the scruff of his neck and shook him, crying: "If you don't tell me how you have learned to grow wise all of a sudden, as you have done, I will break every bone in your back. And if you play me one other trick like this, for that also will I break you when I catch you!"

So then Winkiboo said meekly and in haste: "When I learn my lessons, I go and sit on the statue in the ruined shrine that is in the wood; and that is how I grow wiser."

When Boh-boh heard that, then truly he believed that he had got to the secret of the whole business; so for the time he let Winkiboo go. And the next morning very early he went to the wood where the statue lay, that he might sit on it and learn his lesson and regain the place that he had lost.

But as soon as Buddha saw the big, fat, lazy, clever boy coming to be taught of him, he fell softly forward upon his face, so that whereas he had formerly been seated, what before was lowest now came uppermost.

So Boh-boh, coming to the shrine and finding the image thus prostrate, climbed up and sat himself down on the statue where he found things most convenient for sitting on.

But no sooner had he conned his lesson once through, than he forgot it utterly; and when he got to school that day, he received the due reward of his foolishness, while away in the wood the solitary god sat up and smiled.

But as for Winkiboo, his memory remained unimpaired, and his brain spread; and he became in course of time a paragon of learning, a fathomer of riddles, a trisector of triangles, a worker in logarithms, and a solver of acrostics: for between him and the statue there was a perfect understanding.



"THE LITTLE CONVALESCENT." BY EVA ROOS.



MANY people, of whom I am one, have from time to time, if they are given to dreaming at all while they are asleep, dreams which somehow seem to be of an entirely different texture from the ordinary nightly imaginings with their blurred outline, the inconsequence of the events that take place therein, and the utter unreality of it all to the waking mind. Every now and then a dream of different stuff is woven in the sleeper's brain: that part of it—the subliminal self, or whatever it may be—which never wholly slumbers, is vividly astir, sends its message through the sleeping brain like bubbles rising in still, placid water, rising equally and sanely to the surface in undisfigured rotundity. Such dreams seem, after one has awoke, to be still actual, and though they are not exactly of the same texture as past realities, they are exactly of the same texture as the conjectured and anticipated future. They do not seem “to have been,” but “to be about to be.” And when such dreams visit the pillow of the present writer, he puts them down when he wakes, and gets a witness to subscribe his name thereto. The witness, of course, cannot vouch for the vision, but he vouches for the date. Thus, if any of these dreams (the record of them reposes in a red-leather despatch-box) comes true, I shall send such, neatly dated and witnessed, to the Society for Psychical Research, as an authenticated instance of Dream Premonition.

At present they are all still unsent. But of them all there seems to be none so vivid, so likely (remotely, for the Society will have to wait a long time) to come true, as one which visited me a fortnight ago. It still

haunts me with a sense of reality, in comparison with which the ordinary events of to-day seem dim and unsubstantial.

The evening before this vision occurred I had been dining with sober quietude at a small bachelor party in St. James's Street, and walked home afterwards, for the night was caressingly warm and unusually fine, with a friend and contemporary. During dinner we had talked chiefly about the delights of the High Alps as a winter resort. After that we had played bridge in silence, and walking home, we had talked about Switzerland again. I can find in the memory of our conversation and in the events of the evening nothing which could have suggested in the remotest degree (except that I was among old friends) any part of the dream. I parted from my friend at the corner of Albemarle Street, where he lived, went on alone, went straight to bed, and immediately slept. Then I dreamed as follows:—

I was dining at a small bachelor party in St. James's Street, and all those present—it was a party of eight—were well known to me. But our host, a very old friend—the same man with whom I had actually been dining the evening before—had been somewhat silent and preoccupied during dinner, and as we stood about afterwards, before settling down to easy-chairs or cards, I asked him if anything were wrong. He laughed, still rather uneasily, at this.

“No, not that I *know* of,” he said with rather marked emphasis. Then he paused a moment. “I don't see why I shouldn't tell you,” he said. “It is only that the Superannuation forms for the year have been sent out to-day. I was down at the Home Office this afternoon—Esdaile told me. Well, there are eight of us here, all old friends, and, you know, we are all of us over sixty-five.”

Now, though that fact had not suggested itself before, it was quite certainly true, and it was quite certainly as familiar as a truism. We had all of us got old, but the process had been natural and gradual. From which, incidentally, I gather that age comes kindly and quietly. Certainly the truth of his

remark was apparent : there were only bald heads and grey heads present, and from where I stood I could see the reflection of my own in the glass over the mantelpiece, the shiny forehead reaching up to the top of the cranium, gold-rimmed spectacles, and grey eyebrows. Yet this—so vividly natural was the dream—was no sort of shock : that was the “me” to which I was perfectly accustomed.

But his words, I am bound to say, were of the nature of a shock, for though for the last twelve years I had known that the annual sending out of the Superannuation forms might very intimately affect my contemporaries and me, I do not think I had ever realised it before. The circle of my friends was, I consider, large, though it was all present at that moment in this room, yet a man of seventy-seven who has still seven friends is, I hold, very enviable. But I could ill spare any of them ; also, I

could ill spare myself. All this passed in a flash, and since the mention of the subject was rather like a deliberate pointing to the Death's Head at a feast, I proceeded to turn my back on it. The Death's Head was there, we all knew that, for when eight very elderly gentlemen meet together at the time of the sending out of the Superannuation forms, there is always present the knowledge that they may not all ever meet again. But that, after all, is invariably the case. Anyhow, so I determined, I was going to enjoy the

evening as usual. If this was to be the last time that this particular party, old and stupid and bald as we might be, were going to enjoy, as we had done for the last fifty years, each other's society, so much the more reason for making the most of it. If, on the other hand, we were going to enjoy it again, there was no reason at all for disturbance. So—I was a sprightly old man, I am afraid—I laughed.

“Come, let's play some old-fashioned game,” I said to our host—“bridge, for instance ; let's play bridge and pretend we are all thirty and forty again. But we must play it seriously, just as we used to, in the spirit of forty years ago, when we all used to get so excited about it. By Gad ! I nearly quarrelled with you over it and cut short a friendship that has lasted forty years longer.”

Now the knowledge that the Superannuation forms had been sent out had penetrated over the room, and out of the eight present there were certainly three rather grave faces. But the notion of playing bridge, a game that had been obsolete some twenty years, and of thus artificially putting the clock back, met with marked success, and in a very few minutes two tables had been put out. There was a certain amount of recollective disagreement as to the methods of scoring, but our host happily found, on a shelf of rare old books, a soiled and somewhat battered copy of the Rules of 1905 (first edition), in which year, apparently, certain small alterations came into force. With the shabby volume as referee, from which there was to be no appeal, we started on this queer old game, which always seemed to me to have certain



good points about it, though now it was hard to get a rubber together, unless, as in the present instance, a party of elderly old friends were dining together. For myself, I cut the lowest card but one, and so—the copy of the Rules of 1905 upheld this—I was dummy.

Being dummy, and the first hand being a somewhat uninteresting declaration of clubs, it was not strange that I went back in my mind to the news I had just heard. And to make this dream vivid to the reader in at all the same degree as it was to me, I must enter into a short exposition as to my own feelings and habit of mind, as they were mine in the dream, in order that what follows may be intelligible. It is as vivid to me now—that outlook on life, and knowledge of the modes under which life was passed—as is my present outlook and the present modes of life to me now, as I sit here in the dim noon of a London day and write about the other from mere recollection of a dream. The year then was 1945, because I knew I was seventy-seven years old, and being that age I looked on life in a way that I can remember now with clear-cut vividness, though it was quite foreign to me. I looked, in fact, backwards, and my thoughts were as much and as pleasantly occupied with the past as they are now with the future. But this mention of the Superannuation forms distracted my mind both from the bridge that was being played, and from its habitual grazing-ground in the past, and made it wonder what risk any of those present (and, in particular, myself) ran of receiving one. The whole system of the Superannuation scheme was, of course, perfectly familiar to me, and though in this year 1905 it seems to me rather brutal, it did not seem so in the least in my dream. Familiarity with it may partly account for that, but what more accounts for it, to my mind, is that in the year 1945 one looked on the mere fact of life (the tenses are difficult) in a manner altogether different from that in which one looks on it in 1905. In 1945 the life of the individual mattered far less than it does now, or—which, perhaps, is the same thing—the life and well-being of the nation mattered far more. This, I think, is one of the probable points about the dream, and to my waking mind it was Japan and her heroic, unquestioning sacrifices in 1904 and 1905 during the Russian war, which began to wake the Western nations up to the undoubted fact that to progress as a nation the individual must sacrifice himself

by his thousands (or be sacrificed) without question or demur.

Briefly, then, the Superannuation scheme was this. Anyone over the age of sixty-five was liable to receive each year from the Home Office a printed paper, which, like the income-tax return, he had to fill up to the best of his power and belief. Everybody over that age did not receive them, but a very large number were sent out each year. In this paper were some eight or ten questions, as far as I remember (I shall not forget them or the number of them again), and, to certain of these, witnesses—who were liable to have to swear to the truth of their testimony, and were subject to cross-examination—had to append their names. And if, in the opinion of the Board for Superannuation (attached to the Home Office), the answer to these questions was unsatisfactory, the returner of the form “died” within a fortnight. This Board for Superannuation consisted of the most humane, wise, and kindly men, and any of those who were related to the filler-in of any particular paper, or who could, in the most remote manner possible, profit by his death, were debarred from adjudicating or voting in any such instance. I had several friends on the Board; indeed, I had once been asked whether, if a seat there were offered me, I would take it. This I had declined. The manner of death was infinitely various, and reflected great credit on the ingenuity of the contrivers. It was also perfectly painless, and, I believe, even pleasant. Such was the sum of my musings about the matter while the hand of clubs was being played.

Now all this seems somewhat cold-blooded and unwarrantable to us in 1905; but in 1945, owing chiefly, I think, to the utterly different value put then on mere life, it seemed perfectly reasonable. The population of the world had, of course, vastly increased, and there was no ground left for useless people to cumber. The law had been in force some twenty years, and the form drawn up with the most scrupulous care. Any valid cause why a man should continue to live was cause enough. What exactly the questions were I did not at the moment remember. Afterwards—

However, for the present the bridge went on, and it was late when this pleasant though elderly party broke up. The night was warm and fine, and I walked home with a 1945 edition of the friend mentioned above, with whom I had walked home in 1905. Old times, as usual, occupied our thoughts,

and we recalled our fifty years of friendship with no little complacency.

"And half-a-dozen times, at least, every year," said I, "we must have walked home

seemed to me then in the dream (and, indeed, there seems to me now, when I am awake) a certain humanity, a certain achievement in the mere fact that these two old things had preserved their tolerance and liking for each other during so many years. I am glad to think that I was one of them, for they must have had rather kind hearts and a pleasant indulgence for each other's irritating qualities. In fact, I sincerely hope that this part of the dream may come true.

I let myself into my flat and went into my sitting-room to see if there were any letters. There was only one, in a long, pale-yellow envelope, unstamped, but with O.H.M.S. printed at the top. It looked like income-tax. It also looked like something else.

I opened it; a small white printed paper fell out and fluttered to the ground. There was also a long, yellow printed paper with many blank spaces in it. I read the small white paper first:—

"Home Office, Whitehall.
"May 9, 1945.

"Sir,—

"The Board of Superannuation beg to enclose the usual form, with the request that it may be filled in according to the instructions, and returned to them within the space of seven complete days. For every additional day beyond these you are liable to one year's imprisonment as a criminal of the second class.

"Should your return be satisfactory, you will be informed of the fact within fourteen days of the receipt of your return.

"I beg to remain,

"Your obt. servant,

"A. M. AGUESON (Secretary.)"

Then I read the other paper:—

O. H. M. S.

Superannuation Department.

The recipient is required to fill in answers to the following questions to the best of his ability and belief.

Witnesses are liable to be called upon to repeat their testimony on oath and subject to cross-examination. Suspected perjury on this point will subject them to criminal prosecution.



"There was only one"

from that door together. Three hundred times, at least. Well, well!"

"And three hundred times, at least," said he, "I have asked you to walk a shade slower, just a shade slower. All these fifty years you have never mastered the fact that I am two years your senior. Well, I turn off here," he added, as usual, at the corner of Albemarle Street. "Good night, good night. See you at lunch at the club to-morrow?"

"Rain or fine," said I (also as usual).

Now, to younger people this all sounds very dull; just two old men of near eighty who had often and often bored and irritated each other, toddling home, and settling to lunch at the club next day. But there



"Not less than three in number."

I.—Are you useful?

(Useful is taken to mean *productive* in the widest sense of the word. The answer should therefore include (a) any works or objects of art which the returner is in the habit of producing, (b) all scientific or other research work on which he may be engaged, (c) any other pursuit in which he is now personally engaged which, in his opinion, adds to the pleasure, wealth, or happiness of the nation or of individuals.

Sub-section (d).—Mere employment of labour or mere contribution to charities does not fall under the preceding heads, unless such is accompanied by active work, investigation, or inquiry on the part of the owner or donor. Witnesses to the answer must be: (a) art-critics of the specific art in question of recognised standing, (b) scientific men, (c) responsible manufacturers, and [sub-section (d)] commissioners of charity organisation or similar and recognised schemes.)

Answer.

Witnesses.

II.—Are you beautiful?

(Beautiful must be taken to imply an object of positive beauty, the contemplation

of which is calculated to afford artistic pleasure to the beholder, and stir the artistic into production.

Witnesses to this section must be professional artists, two at least in number, of the standing of A.R.A.)

Answer.

Witnesses.

III.—Are you morally better (though still, perhaps, bad) than you were a year ago?

(Honesty, temper, tact, good nature, patience, truthfulness, content, are all reckoned moral qualities.

Witnesses (not less than three in number) must be (a) clergymen of the Church of England in priests' orders, or two bishops are considered the equivalent of three priests, (b) domestic servants.)

Answer.

Witnesses.

IV.—Are you contributing in other ways than by moral worth, personal beauty, etc., to the reasonable happiness of others? If so, how?

(The word "happiness" to be taken in its broadest sense.

Witnesses to the answer should be not less than three in number, and consist of those who most habitually see the signatory—i.e., friends and domestic servants. The signatory is also recommended to note with the greatest possible accuracy (since this will be tested) the effect that the news that he has received the Superannuation form makes on such.)

Answer.

Witnesses.

V.—Are you likely to become an object of beauty?

(Enclose two photographs, if an affirmative answer is returned, (a) of this year, (b) of any previous year. These photographs will be returned by the Home Office in any event. No witnesses required.)

Answer.

VI.—Are you happy? If so, give a brief sketch of your average day, stating from

what your happiness is derived. No witnesses required.

Answer.

VII.—State broadly any additional reasons you may have for wishing to continue to live. No witnesses required.

Answer.

(This form must be folded and sent entire within seven days. No stamp need be affixed).



I could not say I was beautiful

It was as I read through this that, for the first time, any sense of nightmare or horror awoke in me, and as question after question conveyed itself to my mind, this horror gained on me. I could not say I was beautiful; at least, I could not get an A.R.A. (still less two) to agree with me, except at very grave risk of their incurring the penalty of perjury. Or what three clergymen would say I was better than I was last year? But on purely personal grounds I wanted to live. No doubt that was unworthy; my room, no doubt, was more useful to the nation than my company.

But I still wanted to live, and as I came—so I suppose—nearer to waking, I more and more wanted to live. Whatever the past had been, whatever was the present which was constructed on that, I wanted the future and its opportunities. My own live self, in fact, as my sleep became less deep, began to grow more dominant, while the aged “me” of the dream began to fade, till, with a strangled cry, protesting against the wild injustice of being put out of the world, I awoke, with flying heart and perspiring head, to find my room bright with the newly risen dawn and all the promise of another day.

Now, never in all the archives of this leather box have I had a dream so distinct with the sense of sober reality as this; and as the days passed on, that reality grew no less, till now, when a dozen days have passed, I can recall, as vividly as I can recall anything that ever happened to me in waking hours, the sense of being old, the sense, too—which is utterly alien to me—of looking backwards instead of forwards. For up to a certain time of life one is like a traveller who is seated facing the engine, and ever looks just ahead of what is immediately opposite him. But that time past, for fear of draughts or what not, we gather up a railway rug, seat ourselves with our backs to the direction of progress, and see only that which has passed us.

Again, though the perturbation of waking woke a sense of rebellion in the dreamer’s mind as to the justice and expediency of the Superannuation scheme, my belief in it now is fast and firmly rooted. For—such is the wisdom of the questions—no one, except the most useless drone, stands within the danger of the State-inflicted death. Usefulness, beauty, cause of happiness in others, improvement in oneself, even mere personal happiness, are all taken to be signs—or so I read the paper—that the signatory of the form is still paying his way, so to speak, in the world; that his presence there, being a source of encouragement and pleasure to others, is still desirable; that he is still in some sense a growing being, not a mere blind block on the highway of life over which others may trip and hurt themselves, and which is far better removed. In every line of this dream-document there is statecraft, and in none more



“He will not be sorry to go.”

clearly than in the clause that distinguishes between mere employment of labour, mere charitable munificence, and real usefulness. For such employment of labour and such munificence is but a mechanical function, and could be as well, and probably better, done by others than by one who in no other way contributes to the national welfare. That clause, in fact, seems to me really Japanese in point of insight.

Further, how wise is the question: "Are you happy? If so, why?" For here the State recognises that innocent and instinctive happiness is in itself a gain, a dividend-earning proposition. For happiness is as infectious as misery (which is saying a great deal), and a happy man cannot help contributing to the welfare of the world. It is a fact not yet properly recognised, and I rejoice to know that in 1945 it will be.

Again, in those Utopian days, it will be recognised that beauty is a contributor to the welfare of nations. It must be allowed that now, while London is London and, more especially, New York is New York, a great gulf is fixed between now and then, as regards our Western civilisation, where county councils and other bodies of high intelligence are steadily employed in substituting the ugly for the beautiful, wherever such substitution can be made without undue expense or sacrifice of efficiency. But in 1945, so I have reason now to hope, even though beauty be of so senile a quality as may be exhibited in gentlemen of sixty-five and over, it will be recognised as an asset in a nation's solvency and a reason why the possessor of it should be permitted to live. And from where but from the East may this dawn be expected to enlighten the skies? Here, again, Japan springs to the fore—Japan, who in the midst of the most sanguinary and expensive war that the world has ever seen, celebrates with her accustomed courtesy and merriment the festivals of Chrysanthemum and the Flowering of the Cherry.

Again, how wise and "insighted" to make mere domestics competent witnesses as to a man's habit of diffusing happiness, a thing so vastly important; while for the mere support of his claim to beauty, A.R.A.'s are required to give their signature! For this seems to be at last a practical recognition of the truism that charity begins at home. Deeds of trivial domestic kindness, and the habit of them, are recognised at their real value in this dream-document. Mark, too, the severity of the punishment for perjury.

On first consideration the penalty for delay

in sending in returns seemed to me disproportionate to the offence, but on subsequent reflection I think it is right. For any man who dallies with death for the mere sake of living another day is no longer fit to live, being an essential coward. And if we want to get rid of the superfluous population, let us by all means begin by segregating and putting in confinement all essential cowards. For really there is no use for them. Cowardice stains the whole character: it eats like corrosive acid into whatever apology for other virtues there may happen to be, and renders them futile.

Finally, how sound a principle underlies the whole scheme! Such a paper might indeed be set with advantage, not merely to poor old folk of over sixty-five, but to all adults, since its challenge is "Justify your existence." If any man cannot justify his own existence, it is almost certain that nobody else can do it for him. He came into the world through no volition of his own: surely he may be enabled to leave it in the same manner, if his presence there is unjustified on so broad a field of inquiry as is covered by this Superannuation form. Above all, if he is not happy, he will not be sorry to go, while if he is, any reasonable grounds will be accepted by the Board—or so I read it—as a sufficient reason for his being allowed to live. But—this, too, is wise—the grounds of his happiness must be reasonable. I cannot imagine the Board accepting a burglar because he took pleasure in stealing.

* * * * *

So there in the leather box this dream reposes. It would give me great pleasure—if it were in my power to do so—to dream on the same subject again, in order to clear up, for my own satisfaction, several points which are still vague to me. I want to know, for instance, whether one affirmative answer, if completely satisfactory, entitles the signatory to a fresh lease of life.

Ah, yes, it must be so. However hopeless in other respects, a man of over sixty-five who can thrill with joy (and satisfy the Board on the point) when, on an early day of spring, he sees the pale crocuses peer above the grass, and feels the spring in his bones, is surely worthy to live, on the mere consciousness of his own happiness, whether he be twenty years old, or seventy, or ninety—in fact, the older he is, the less he can be permitted to die, if he can possibly be kept alive. For on such a day, though it is easy for the blackbirds to have their will, it takes a poet to have his.

IN THE TUNNEL.

By T. W. HANSHEW.



I CANNOT conceive what impelled me to do the thing, for I am not what might be called a "betting man" at any time, and, moreover, the habit of speaking my thoughts aloud is not one of my many failings. But, be the cause what it may, the fact remains that, just as the train pulled away from the dingy little station at Modane, and the fat man in the corner began to nod again, I said quite audibly: "I'll bet a fiver that fellow is asleep before we reach the tunnel, and will snore like a blessed pig the whole way through it!"

I did not address my remarks to any of the persons who shared the compartment with me; for one thing, I did not suppose any of them understood more than a word or two of English at most, and, for another, I was, as I have stated, merely speaking my thoughts aloud. There were four of us in all—a mummified Italian who kept his nose in a book, hour in and hour out; the fat German who had sat blinking like an owl every time I opened my eyes during the night, and had only had two waking intervals since the day broke; and a somewhat sallow-faced individual who looked like a Frenchman, and spent the time jotting things down on a pocket writing-block when he wasn't chewing the end of his lead-pencil and staring up at the roof of the carriage in a manner indicative of deep thoughtfulness.

A more engaging set of animated dead men it had never been my misfortune to travel with. We had left Paris—*en route* for Genoa—at nine o'clock the previous evening; we had tumbled out at Modane the next morning to pass the Customs on the Italian frontier (and, incidentally, to partake of a villainous breakfast at the *buffet*), and during the entire fourteen hours of our enforced association, not one solitary word had been spoken by any member of the party until I unthinkingly broke the silence

in the manner recorded. It came, therefore, as a somewhat startling surprise when the man whom I had long ago decided as a French commercial traveller making up his accounts *en route*, glanced round at me and said, with as fine an accent as ever came out of Cornwall: "No—o, I think not. He is pretty good at the game, I will admit; but I fancy he won't go as far as *that*," and forthwith shoved his writing-block into his pocket and edged along the seat until he was beside me.

I do not know which surprised me the more—this sudden spirit of sociability upon his part, or the fact of his being an Englishman, and I was just groping round in my mind for words to express my sentiments, when he flung another piece of intelligence at me.

"If you like to bet on losing hazards, that fellow will accommodate you," he said in a carefully lowered tone and with a nod in the direction of the somnolent German. "He understands English."

"How do you know that?" I inquired. "He hasn't spoken a syllable since he came in here last night."

"I am well aware that he hasn't. Thinks he would make it too agreeable for other people if he did. But he understands English well enough to read it, if you will take the trouble to notice that newspaper sticking out of his coat pocket. It's a copy of the Paris edition of the *Herald*."

"But that proves nothing. He may have bought it for a friend."

"Not he. If I know anything, I know the human mule when I see him; and if that fellow hadn't been too far gone when you offered to wager five pounds that he would snore the whole way through the tunnel, he would have defeated you on general principles. You can't trust a man with a mouth and chin like his to let you win *anything* if he can prevent it. Think he is sleeping because he enjoys that sort of thing? Not a bit of it! His wife, if he has one, or somebody else if he hasn't, told him to take especial note of the scenery of French Savoy, and to get out his watch and count the minutes it actually does take the train to pass through the Mont Cenis tunnel; and he kept awake all

last night so that he shouldn't be able to do it. He would have drugged himself if he couldn't manage to sleep any other way, the contrary beggar!"

I glanced over at the sleeping German and laughed. The man's face certainly did suggest those characteristics now that my attention was called to the fact, although I had not remarked it before.

"Are you a family connection of Sherlock Holmes's?" I asked.

"Not the slightest," he replied, with a curious smile that lifted one corner of his mouth half way up his cheek. "That is one of the few lines I have never tackled as yet. But one never knows what cards one may be called upon to play before the end of the game. *Je ne me doute de rien—et je ne parle jamais de ce que je fais.* I didn't throw that in for the mere purpose of letting you understand that I know more languages than my own," he added parenthetically. "I have lived so many years in Paris that the thing has become almost second nature to me; besides—pardon me a moment. We shall be entering the tunnel presently, and I never fail to take a look at this particular bit of landscape."

He rose as he spoke, and stood with his hand upon the strap which controlled the window, and his eyes fixed upon me with a curious sort of intentness.

"Ever been through the Cenis tunnel?" he asked.

"No, never. This is my first experience," I replied. "Is the sensation as uncanny as I have been told?"

"It would require a second Poe to do justice to it. As for me——" He lifted the strap of the window, and I could see that his hand shook nervously. "I always liken the passage through it to six-and-twenty minutes in hell, and I never fail to fill my eyes and my memory with the picture of green trees and bright sunlight before I am swung into the place. But then, mine was such an awful, such an unearthly experience——"

A sudden crash cut in upon his words. The window-strap had slipped from his hand, and the sash shot down with a bang that made the sleeping man beside it start up with an excited "*Ach! Lieber Gott!*" and the reading Italian turn for the first time from his book. And, at the same moment, light and air and landscape were licked up and swallowed, a swirl of darkness swooped down and struck our eyes, a sulphurous blast gripped our throats and stank in our nostrils,

and the whole world seemed to have plunged back suddenly into a roaring, reeking chaos.

We were in the tunnel.

"*Ich bitte um Entschuldigung; es war sehr albern von mir,*" said the Cornishman, looking over his shoulder and addressing the scowling German as the tiny spark of light in the dish-shaped lamp in the ceiling began to make its existence manifest. "I suppose I am a fool," he added, dropping back into English and speaking to me this time, "but I am always more or less nervous and upset when we say 'Good-bye' to the world at large and swing into this hell-hole. It was here—whilst the train was whizzing along just as it is doing now, and the darkness was so thick you could cut it—that the man without a head got in and sat down opposite me—just as our German friend there is sitting opposite you."

"*Gott im Himmel!*"

I could hear the suppressed exclamation even through the steady, insistent roar of the train, and I instinctively glanced over at the German. He had drawn himself up into the smallest possible space, and sat, a thing all eyes, huddled as far back in the shadow of his corner as his size would permit. I knew the instant our eyes met that he shared my sudden suspicion of the Cornishman's sanity, if he did not, indeed, share the sensation of swiftly alternating flashes of heat and cold which were that moment zigzagging up and down my spinal column.

For half a minute, as we swayed on through the sulphurous blackness, the Cornishman struggled with the window-strap (for the impact had jammed the sash, and it was no easy matter to readjust it), and during that half-minute I think I must have recalled all the stories of encounters with madmen and all the "Hints on Self-Protection in Cases of Emergency" I had ever read, and I fancy that my face must have reflected my thoughts when the man finally got the sash in place and resumed his seat beside me, for the curious smile was again half way up his cheek.

"I hope you won't get to thinking that I have escaped from an asylum," he said; "although I am free to admit that what I said just now would be considered ample grounds for doing so. Nevertheless——" His voice sank, and the smile slid down his cheek and vanished—"it was the plain, unvarnished truth, and it happened as I told you—whilst we were scudding along through this *Inferno*-like darkness, just as the train is doing now."



"'Ever been through the Ceniz tunnel?' he asked."

"But a man without a head!" I ventured to expostulate, reassured by his demeanour. "And to enter a moving train—in a tunnel! The thing is impossible, you know, impossible!"

"So I should have thought, myself, if I had heard another fellow tell it," he replied, with a slight shudder. "But you can't dispute what you have seen for yourself; you can't say a thing is impossible when you have experienced it. Ever since that time I have had a deeper appreciation of those lines in 'Hamlet' regarding the mysteries of heaven and earth which are undreamt of in our philosophy."

He paused—as if undecided whether to go on or not—and I saw his gaze travel to the window as he sank back against the cushion and shaded his eyes with a shaking hand.

"I know I am a fool, and that such an experience is never likely to be duplicated," he said after a moment, "but I am always expecting that dead fellow to come back, and I never enter this horrible hole without looking for him."

He was shaking all over now. I reached for my pocket-flask, and pulling off the metal cup, slopped out a good, stiff peg of brandy and handed it to him.

"Here, take a drink of this; it will pull you together," I said. "And—I should like to hear—if you care to talk about it."

He drank the brandy at a gulp, and thanked me with a nod as he handed back the cup.

"I don't often speak of it," he replied. "I hate to be set down as a liar or a lunatic; but—well—I *will* tell *you*. It happened two years ago, and I was going then (as I am going now) to Luvinci, a small station just outside of this tunnel on the Italian side, where the train stops only on signal or by arrangement with the guard. At that time I was connected with a Franco-Italian firm of jewellers and dealers in precious stones, and as the samples I carried were extremely valuable, I made it a point when travelling by train to always engage an entire compartment and have the guard lock me in securely. I was, therefore, quite alone when the affair of which I am about to tell you occurred—a circumstance which I have always deeply regretted, since it leaves me absolutely without witnesses of any sort to corroborate my statement. I was, moreover, unusually careful on this particular occasion, and kept a loaded revolver lying upon the seat beside me. I did this for two very good reasons. The first

was that I was carrying upon my person jewels amounting in value to nearly three hundred thousand francs (our firm was executing a commission for the Royal house of Italy); and the second because, some four months previously, a fellow commercial traveller, who had the misfortune to resemble me very closely indeed, had been murdered in a compartment of the Lyons express, and his murderer, who was most fortunately captured, confessed before going to the guillotine that he had mistaken the man for me."

He paused as though overcome by some hideous recollection, and passed a shaking hand across his forehead.

"A narrow squeak for you," I said, feeling that I ought to say something.

"Very," he agreed. "And it did not tend to make me feel any the more comfortable to learn, as I did learn from the confession of the murderer—he was an Alsatian, by the way, and his name was Ettienne Clochard—that I had long been shadowed by the members of the organised gang to which he had belonged, and that, in his own characteristic phraseology, 'they would have me yet.' On the morning prior to my starting upon the journey of which I am now telling you, this Ettienne Clochard had been guillotined in Paris, and there was a full account of the execution in all the evening papers, *La Presse* in particular giving a very graphic description of it. Call it a morbid taste if you like, but that description fascinated while it appalled me. I think I read it quite a dozen times that night and a dozen more the next morning, and I was reading it again when the train whizzed suddenly into this tunnel, and all the world seemed to be blotted out in darkness and vapour. The lamp in the compartment was even less adequate than this one, and I laid the paper aside, unable to read more. The horrible droning of the wheels—(Listen! you can hear it now)—combined with the gloom and, perhaps, the gruesomeness of the thing I had been reading, got on my nerves and made them raw; the moisture, catching the sulphurous vapour, covered the windows as though they were smeared with milk, and the foggy atmosphere of the compartment made breathing a labour. The rocking train raced on, and, after a time, the green silk 'eyelids' over the ceiling lamp, disturbed by the vibration, winked and slid down. I got up and stood with a foot on either seat, trying to adjust them. They would not



“As I faced round, I saw standing before me the shape of a man.”

remain up, however, and I had just determined to take out my pocket-knife and cut them away altogether when I heard the door behind me—the locked door!—open and close with a bang. I don't know whether I fell or jumped down from my perch; I only know that I got down

somehow, and that, as I faced round, all my nerves pricking and twitching, and my heart hammering against my ribs as though it would beat its way out of me, I saw standing before me the shape of a man—a tall, slim man, with a great scoop cut out of his coat and shirt where the collar should

have been, a slim, red line running round his throat, and above that line a grey-white, dead face with shut eyes and hanging lips."

"*Ach! Lieber Gott!*"

I heard the words quaver out from the German's corner, but I could not see his face, for the thick vapour which the opened window had let in floated between us, humid, yellow, reeking of sulphur. I looked round at the Cornishman, every fibre of my being tingling, and something creeping up my neck. He was sitting bolt upright and looking straight before him, his forehead puckered up, and the second joint of his left forefinger held between his teeth.

"Go on," I said faintly. "You are sure it wasn't nerves?"

"As sure as I am that you are sitting here beside me this minute," he replied. "Nerves may often make a man fancy that he sees things, but they can't make those things talk."

"And *he* talked?"

"Yes. As I faced round and saw him, his dead lips said quite distinctly: 'Good evening, comrade. We travel far and fast. It may be morning to you, but it is evening to me—for ever!' And then, with a wave of the hand, inviting me to resume my seat, he sat down in the corner near the window and turned his dead face towards me, his eyelids never once lifting, and his head, jarred by the movement of the train, rocking unsteadily upon his shoulders. Once he put up his hand to steady it, and as his fingers touched that red line about his throat, 'The trade-mark of Monsieur de Paris,' he said, with a ghastly movement of the lips which, in a living man, would have been a smile. 'He guillotined me at dawn this morning.'"

The voice of the Cornishman dropped off suddenly into silence, and once again he took his knuckle between his teeth, his eyes looking straight before him as though he were lost in thought. As for me, I sat waiting for the next word as breathlessly as ever schoolboy hung over one of Poe's tales, my heart pumping like an engine, and the pores of my skin pricked up into little beads.

The train alone made sound now, for even the German's voice was still. For a time we reeled on through the blackness of the tunnel in this state of nervous tension, and then the Cornishman spoke again.

"I do not know whether I fainted or not when the Thing in the corner said that," he went on; "but some sort of suspension of the faculties must have occurred, for there

is a period of blankness in my memory from that precise moment until the time when I found myself half-sitting, half-lying upon the seat immediately in front of my awful companion, and my hand groping blindly for the spot where I had placed my revolver. I know that even then I was conscious of the uselessness of such a weapon—of any weapon—against such a visitant as he; but I groped for it all the same, yet groped in vain. In some strange way, by some malign agency, the thing had been spirited away, and I sat there helpless, hopeless, appalled, with that dead creature gibbering at me in the green dusk of the veiled lamp. The train rocked on, his doddering head keeping time to the swaying motion of it, and that awful parody of a smile distorting his loose-lipped mouth. I fought with myself—I tried to reason with myself; I struck my hands together and dug my nails into the flesh in the effort to wake myself from what I felt must surely be nightmare. It could not be, this thing—it simply could not be, I told myself. It was out of all reason—out of all possibility, and yet—there it was before me, and I was not sleeping—not dreaming; neither was the creature in the corner a shade, for it actually cast a shadow on the cushioned back of the seat!"

I admit it—to my everlasting shame I admit it: as the Cornishman made that statement I gave a little gulp, and twitched away from him as from some uncanny thing, and huddled up in my corner much as I had seen the German huddle up in his. I did not speak. I had reached a point where I simply could not. I merely held my breath and waited.

"I do not know how long it was before the Creature spoke again," the Cornishman went on; "but of a sudden I became aware that its voice was again sounding above the muttered thunder of the train, and that it was crooning to itself rather than talking to me. 'Ah! he is the prince of valets is Monsieur de Paris,' I distinctly heard it say. 'So softly he touches, so softly! It is like the brush of a bird's wing, that sweep of the shears round the shoulders that lays bare the neck and lets the morning air blow on it. It is like the touch of a feather, that snip! snip! behind the ears, and the gentle falling of the cropped hair on the warm, bare shoulders—the thick, matted hair that smells even yet of the pomatum Lanisparre the barber rubbed into it all those days ago. *Ohé! Monsieur de Paris, I salute you.* What a tender dog



"You had me nicely."

you are, with your sorrowful eyes and your red gloves—not to shock a man's sensibilities! But you smell of sawdust, *cher ami*, and the hinge of your basket creaks. Softly, softly! don't hurry a man when he is taking his last walk. Aha! my friend the tilting-board, you shine like glass; but we shall have a short acquaintance, you and I. *Vivat!* we are off! I see you open your hungry jaws, Monsieur the Lunette; I see you flash in the dawnlight, Madame Three-Corners, and I rush to meet you. It is touch and go; it is click and off. *Vive la France! vive la! vive la!*"

Again the voice of the Cornishman dropped off into silence. I sat breathless, quivering, waiting for him to speak the next word.

"I do not know," he said presently, "how my reason survived the shock of that moment; I do not know, I do not pretend to imagine, what would have been the end of the horrible experience had I not at that point made a discovery which gave the whole ghastly affair a different complexion, and made me shut my hands hard, and pull myself together for what I now felt would be a fight for life. It was no less a thing than the discovery of the whereabouts of my missing revolver. It was lying on the cushioned seat between the knees of the decapitated man! I sucked in my breath with a sort of gasp as I made that discovery, and a thought only less horrible than the one it had exercised hammered at the back of my brain. If the revolver had been useless to turn against it, why had the Creature been at the pains to deprive me of it? Was it a trick, then? Was my ghastly visitant merely some clever thief who had adopted this appalling disguise, and invented this daring plan, for the purpose of frightening me into complete helplessness before he summoned his confederates to rob and murder me? If that was his game——"

The Cornishman stopped short and left the sentence unfinished. I saw his eye travel to the window, and the curious smile glide up his cheek again. My own gaze followed the direction of his.

Along the vapour-smeared surface of the glass a faint glow of light was creeping—a light which presently burst into the compartment with such a fierce and blinding glare that for an instant I could see nothing.

The Italian laid aside his book for the first time, and lowered the window nearest to him, the Cornishman got up and loosened the

strap of the one close to where I sat; and, as a current of fresh air swung through the compartment and dispelled the fog, I became conscious that we were out of the tunnel, and that the German was still sitting huddled up in his corner with gaping lips and wide-open eyes.

The Cornishman rose, lifted his portmanteau out of the rack, looked down at me and—winked.

"I reckon I've won that five-pound note hands down," he said, with a laugh. "Our friend from the Fatherland never slept a wink, nor snored a snore, the whole way through."

I looked at him aghast, dimly comprehending, but too far gone to speak, and then mechanically put my hand to my breast-pocket, for the train was slowing down, and I remembered what he had said with regard to his destination.

"Well, I'm *dashed!*" I managed to gasp at last, and pulled my purse into view.

"No, don't pay it to me," he said hastily. "I've won it, I know, but—send it as a donation to Dr. Barnardo's Home; it will do some good there. I am sure I can trust you to do it; you were so willing to pay up like a man. One last word—don't make rash bets in future; you will always find somebody ready to take you up. Good-bye."

The train had stopped, and the guard was at the door.

"Your station, signor," he said, and reached out his hand for the man's portmanteau.

And then, for the first time, the German spoke.

"*Ach!*" he blurted out, leaning forward as the Cornishman was getting out, and laying a twitching hand upon his sleeve. "You go like dis? Sir, you do not tell if it vas really a teef or de ghost of dot Clochard mans, and I am exploding mit curiosities already. De end of de story, it is vat?"

"What you like to make of it, my good sir," the Cornishman replied. "It began under *my* hat, and there's no earthly reason why it shouldn't end under yours. Good-bye!" He turned and held out his hand to me. "Barnardo's kids will be the gainer, at all events."

"Good-bye," I answered, as I leant out and wrung the hand he extended. "It was ripping, and you had me nicely. I say, you know, *you* ought to write for the magazines."

He looked up at me and laughed.

"I do!" he said, and walked quietly away.



PREHISTORIC TALES.

By CHARLES GLEIG.

I.—THE CAVE OF DISCORD.

ABOUT the year 10,000 B.C. (these prehistoric legends can seldom be dated precisely), a great whale feast was in progress on the southern shore of the Bristol Channel. In those times the Channel was much narrower than now, and whales quite frequently tantalised by their inaccessible gambols the cave-dwellers on its rocky shores. The coracle was not yet invented—though even in coracles one cannot greatly enjoy the pursuit of whales. The sea-monster upon which the Sux tribe was feasting had been washed ashore, some days previously, during a severe gale. The carcass was still moderately fresh when a bountiful Providence thus favoured the tribe with free meals and a supply of oil that promised cheap lubrication for a month. The tribe had no large vessels in which the oil could be stored, but every man could rub himself from head to heel with lumps of the odoriferous blubber, whilst the married men

"A great whale feast was in progress."

also anointed their favourite wives and carried away fragments of meat for their children.

The sun was setting over what we now call the Welsh hills, as a young man and a maiden clambered out of the stinking carcass, laden with meat and blubber. The season being warm, the man had left his reindeer skin at home. The girl, with a prudery somewhat in advance of the age, wore a narrow girdle of hide, and was further bedecked for the feast with a necklet of shells, strung upon reindeer sinew. The man was named Ug, the maiden Zug. As the girl's head rose above the surface of the torn carcass, she slipped, and would have slid back into the interior but for the swift aid of her companion, who caught her beneath her glistening arms. Regaining a foothold in a crevice of the carcass, she tossed back her dark, oily hair and laughed merrily. Still supporting her with his free arm, Ug bent his head and rubbed his nose tenderly against hers. The girl faintly resisted, but presently returned the caress.



"Ug rubbed his nose tenderly against hers."

"See, you have made me drop a piece of the meat," she said reproachfully.

"I will give you all of mine," said Ug. "All that I carry is for your father, and to-morrow I will bring more to his cave."

Zug sighed, but did not reply. Together they slid off the carcass on to the soft mud that fringed the shore. The tide was low; indeed, the prize was submerged at high water, although secured by the skill of the tribe against drifting away. The men had driven many stakes into the mud, forming a rude scaffolding round the carcass.

Gaining the stony beach, the lovers paused to glance back at the festive scene. Scores of men, women, and children were still revelling upon the raw meat beneath the surface of blubber. By strenuous labour the blubber had been torn away, for the tribe owned no better implements than flints. Cooked meat they preferred, but, in the rude fashion of the age, they were well content to eat their fill of a raw dainty liable to be washed away by the next gale. Many of the savages were sleeping, full-gorged, upon the beach. Others still lingered within the



carcass. Others, again, were carrying loads of the meat and blubber to their sorry habitations. Here and there, along the shore, men were fighting over tit-bits of flesh. The tribe, indeed, was suffering from indigestion on this second day of the festivities.

Quitting the beach, Ug and Zug took their way along a natural track leading to the girl's home. The path was carpeted with turf, and tolerably free from roots and bushes. On their left hand ran the brown waters of the Channel; on their right rose a virgin hillside, dense with gorse and forest. Hundreds of rabbits, at play in the twilight, ambled across the track to their holes as the lovers advanced.

Ug was a finer specimen of manhood than you will commonly meet in modern Somersetshire. He was accounted one of the swiftest hunters of the tribe. He was of medium height, very muscular, and swarthy of skin. He had another claim to distinction, being the proprietor of one of the largest and driest caves inhabited by the tribe.

Unfortunately, he had let his cave to Fug, a fellow-tribesman, who had since become a rival for the hand of the fascinating Zug. It is probable that Ug was the first landlord; by the Sux tribe, at any rate, the compact was regarded as entirely original. The rent fixed was six reindeer per annum, and Ug made no charge for water-rate, although there was

"A shout of triumph burst from his brawny chest. The slab had yielded."

a slight fissure in the roof. The cave was salubriously situated, some five feet above high-water mark, commanded a fine view of the Channel, and was agreeably sheltered from the westerly gales of winter by a projecting bluff. A curious feature of the cave merits notice: the great flat slab forming the roof was so delicately poised upon an internal boulder that during exceptionally violent storms it slightly oscillated. The motion was almost imperceptible, but Ug had observed the peculiarity. Indeed, this had been his reason for accepting a tenant, for it seemed to him possible that the slab might some day lose its delicate balance and seal

the mouth of the cave. Being a prudent young man, he kept this apprehension to himself and became Fug's landlord.

The agreement, made in the presence of old Sux and other chiefs of the tribe, had been somewhat loosely worded. Six reindeer yearly was the stipulated rent, but Ug had carelessly assumed that Fug would pay by instalments. Subject to the payment of his rent, Fug was entitled to occupy the cave indefinitely. For this clause he had contended with a persistence that had rather amused Ug, until he ascertained Fug's reason for making the condition.

Fug had barely been in residence a couple of moons when a large herd of reindeer chanced to visit the neighbourhood, and scores of them were "bagged" by the tribe. Hitherto, reindeer had been scarce, and Ug had not reckoned upon a glut of the dainty. In the course of ten days, Fug killed and delivered the whole of his first year's rent. Ug objected, and, pending the decision of the chiefs, four out of the six reindeer went bad at the entrance of Ug's temporary abode. Fug was an eloquent speaker and won his case. In those days, you will perceive, the law of landlord and tenant had not been evolved, and the rights of property were but dimly understood. The chiefs held that the rent had been lawfully tendered; so Ug lost his suit, and had, moreover, to bury the bad venison himself.

The case led to strained relations between Ug and his tenant. Several sharp flints grazed Fug's head after nightfall, and the leak in the roof perceptibly increased.

Not long after the memorable glut of reindeer, Ug fell in love, in his primitive fashion, with Zug, a daughter of old Sux, and offered to buy her. He bid three superb flint hatchets, two scrapers, and a small annual tribute of reindeer, being spurred to this liberality by a suspicion that Fug also fancied the smiling maid.

"Oh! it is too much," said the thrifty and modest girl, when Ug told her of his magnificent offer.

"No, it is not enough," said Ug simply.

"Am I, then, so fair in your eyes?" she asked bashfully.

"Your eyes," said Ug, "are as bright to me as the stars" (the simile was relatively fresh ten or twelve thousand years ago), "your breath is as sweet as the flesh of the reindeer, your laugh drives away sadness as the sun melts the mists of morning."

"Yet there are no hatchets or scrapers so sharp as thine, O Ug, my beloved,"

replied the maiden; "and after marriage, perhaps, you will wish for your weapons back, and be sad."

"I would pay six hatchets," said Ug recklessly (and, perhaps, not quite truthfully). "Yet your father denies me."

"What! He refused?" she exclaimed.

"The old chief has refused," said Ug mournfully.

"It is very strange," said Zug, and, mindful of the proprieties, she withdrew herself from his ardent embrace.

Some weeks had elapsed since this conversation, and, meanwhile, Ug had fruitlessly raised the bidding. Hitherto, the greed of Zug's father had remained inexplicable to the lovers, but on the night of the whale feast the girl's laughter cloaked a heavy heart. Ug, on the other hand, being full of meat, was in hopeful mood.

"See," he said, as they neared the Chief's cave—"see, this gift of meat will gladden your father, and to-night I will offer him one half of all that I kill for twelve moons."

"And yet he will deny you, O mighty hunter," sighed Zug. "Ah! why did you let you cave to Fug?"

Her voice rose to a pitch of passionate regret that smote his ear like a reproach.

"What do you mean?" he asked sternly, gripping her by the arm.

"My father greatly desires to live in the cave," she faltered. "Oh! why did you let it to Fug? He says that I must wed Fug, and you know that I do not love him. I would rather dwell on the bare hillside with you, than find warmth with such as he."

"Fug must die, then," said Ug quietly.

"No, no!" cried Zug. "Remember the laws of the tribe. If you slay him, except for sufficient reason, they will stone you."

"Then let us escape together," said Ug. "We will renounce the tribe and raise up a new and mightier race from our children."

The girl shuddered as she clung to him. "I dare not," she said. "You are swift and brave, but what is one chief against a tribe? Soon, too, some strange tribe would seize us. You they would slay, and I should become a slave."

"It is true," sighed Ug.

Her news so depressed him that he had no heart to bid again that evening. Old Sux, it was evident, was bent upon ending his days in the coveted cave, and meant to live there with Fug and Zug. The lovers parted in sorrow, Ug retracing his steps towards a hollow tree in which he had found bachelor quarters.

That night Ug could not sleep, but lay



"Ug and Zug often picknicked outside the cave."

tossing and twisting on his circular couch, consumed by a natural craving to assassinate Fug. But the tribal laws were strict, and his rival had given him no provocation that the chiefs would consider adequate. Old Sux had the clearest right to dispose of a daughter to the best advantage, yet Ug, as a landlord, glowed with resentment at his inability to evict Fug. The cave was his own property, and he anticipated, by thousands of years, the natural privileges of the landlord. The expedient of warning old Sux against the

roof danger he weighed and rejected. The Chief would not believe that the roof oscillated—nobody would credit his unsupported statement.

Marriage was not taken very seriously in those days, but the announcement of Fug's approaching nuptials with the twentieth daughter of the Chief excited a mild interest in the tribe, mainly because there would be a feast. Ug's disappointment was much discussed among the maidens, for his renown as a hunter made him an eligible *parti*.

Ug, meanwhile, prayed earnestly to his gods for stormy weather, and propitiated them with blubber sacrifices. During several days there was no response, but he kept the fire going and fairly beggared himself in vows of future liberality. And his faith was rewarded, for on the night preceding the nuptials a heavy gale sprang up from the right quarter, and then Ug knew that the gods smiled upon his project. To mark his gratitude he burnt his last ounce of blubber, and two of his best reindeer skins. This done, he shouldered a young pine tree, which he had laboriously shaped to his purpose, and took his way along the wind-swept hillside.

An hour later, and hard upon midnight, Ug reached the back of the cave. The gale had increased in violence. The wind howled and sobbed among the trees; the dark waters of the Channel were crested with the foam of breaking waves; the shore was lashed with flying spray; the moon was hidden by a lowering sky. Ug crouched down upon his belly and laid his hands upon the great slab roof. The movement of the stone was distinctly perceptible, and never before had he felt it oscillate so frequently. And yet, so perfect was the balance, so ponderous the slab, that Ug began to doubt whether his lever and one pair of strong arms would suffice to displace it. Then he remembered how his gods had already favoured the enterprise, and took heart. The gale, he piously recognised, was no accidental event. So, with a final prayer, Ug thrust his fir tree into a certain crevice and awaited the upward movement of his side of the slab. Once, twice, thrice, he strained every muscle of his body. At the third attempt, his lever broke like a carrot, about a foot from its lower end. The snap was drowned by the gale, but Ug fell heavily upon the uneven surface of the slab and barked the front of his body, from the nose downwards. On the verge of saying something rude about his gods, Ug checked the imprudent complaint and promised more blubber instead. Fug still slept, which seemed another proof of miraculous favour. Profiting by the accident, Ug now made more intelligent use of the lever. He thrust his pole further into the crevice, muttered a final prayer (which threatened to leave Zug skinless for several winters), and awaited the upward movement.

A shout of triumph burst from his brawny chest. The slab had yielded. For a moment it hung motionless, as though reluctant to glide from its ancient pivot, but Ug re-

doubled his efforts, and slowly the near end rose. Higher, higher it rose, majestic in its silence, awful in its bulk. Then, with a rending crash, the great slab obeyed the law of gravity. The ground shook, the neighbouring rocks trembled, as the monster came to rest, sealing the mouth of the cave.

During some minutes Ug was so deeply awed by his work (not through any sentimentality on behalf of Fug) that he lacked resolution to move. Then anxiety overcame his awe. He scrambled to the front of the cave to see if his hopes were realised. They were realised; Fug was securely entombed. Not till daylight, however, was Ug's peace of mind assured. Kindly dawn showed him that only one little crevice, just wide enough to admit a man's hand, connected his rival with the outer world. Through this narrow aperture he could just distinguish the gloomy face of Fug.

"Good morning," said Ug courteously. "What time is the wedding?"

"Help me out," groaned Fug, "and you shall marry her yourself. Oh! my friend, I did wrong to pay the rent in a lump."

"No," said Ug, "the Chief sided with you. Let us say no more about it."

"Help me out!" screamed Fug.

Then Ug, being a primitive person, dropped irony and exulted openly in his triumph. He told Fug all about his sacrifices, and how his gods had approved his revenge. He also gave Fug his views on the ideal relations between landlords and tenants. Reverting to banter, he waived all further claim in the matter of rent, and pointed out to Fug that he might live rent free to quite a ripe old age, if his family thought it worth while to feed him through the crevice. He expressed the hope that Fug was on good terms with his relatives. Lastly, he assured Fug that he would himself be a kind husband to Zug, whom he meant to marry that evening.

* * * * *

Legend records that old Sux raised no further obstacles to the union of his daughter with Ug. He seems to have recognised that a slab of rock, two feet thick, constituted a valid impediment to the marriage which he had previously sanctioned.

Fug, so tradition states, lived rent free to an advanced age, and set up in later life as a kind of prophet. Ug and Zug often picnicked outside the cave on summer afternoons, and occasionally Zug would throw the recluse a piece of meat.



"His little stomach fitted better into the lump of boulder."

PREHISTORIC TALES.

By CHARLES GLEIG.

II.—CLUB-LAW.

UG and Zug had been very happily married for a year, when a member of the tribe, named Mug, came to reside in the empty cavern opposite. Mug appears to have moved early in the spring of 9999 B.C. The season was certainly springtime, but the prehistoric records are uncertain, within a thousand years or so, and the precise date cannot be accurately stated.

Moving was not a very arduous business in those days, and Mug, being newly married, had little furniture to shift beyond two pairs of reindeer skins and his outfit of flint choppers and scrapers.

The bride simplified the move by wearing the whole of her trousseau; but a civilised observer would hardly have noticed it. Zug, of course, did notice it. She was nursing her baby at the entrance of Ug's cave, and, catching sight of Mrs. Mug's pebble necklace and bone earrings, she instantly grew

dissatisfied with her entire outfit of shells and feathers.

The Mugs' cavern was situated some twenty yards inland of Ug's cave, and Zug had sometimes proposed using it as a spare room for the accommodation of her husband's bachelor friends. For Zug was rather a prude, and, if the legends may be credited, this defect in her charming character was never entirely overcome. Ug, however, would not permit his friends to be isolated in a damp cavern, so it had remained unoccupied for a long time.

"Ug," said his wife, when he returned from the chase that night, "those Mugs have moved into the cavern, and I want a pebble necklace."

The young hunter had been married long enough to perceive the connection between the Mugs' move and his wife's inordinate desire.

"The necklace was the gift of Mug's father," he replied, "and they say it took fifty moons to make."

"Your father," sighed Zug, "only gave me a worn-out marrow-pusher."

"For which, at the time, Zug, you thanked him on your own pretty marrow-bones."

The conjugal compliment pacified her for the moment, and Ug managed to get to sleep. But Zug lay awake for an hour, partly because of the undecorated state of her shapely neck; partly, too, because Ug had secured the better side of the conjugal couch. Her side had two nasty lumps of boulder in

of maternity, Zug forgot the necklace; but her pangs of envy revived next day. For the well-dressed bride opposite vaunted her neck-gear even on working days; and Zug, as she went about her simple, cavehold duties, felt at her own nude neck as a young man fumbles anxiously with his hairless upper lip. Probably Mrs. Mug was afraid to hang it up or hide it in a hole, but Zug did not consider these risks.

Thus the relations between the ladies were, from the outset, strained. Zug omitted the usual courtesy of presenting her neighbour with a joint of meat, and Mrs. Mug retaliated by making a very offensive bonfire when the wind blew towards the mouth of Ug's cave.

After gazing upon the pebble necklace for half a moon, Zug began to lose her appetite.

"If you were a loving lord," she told Ug, "you'd get me a necklace."

"But, my dearest lake-eyes," protested Ug, "there is but one other in the tribe, and that belongs to your father's new wife."

"Still, you would get me one," persisted Zug sullenly, "and," she added significantly, "it wouldn't be my new stepmother's."

Ug pondered the dark saying as he followed the prints of the deer. His wits were less swift than his nimble heels, but after two days he grasped her meaning. Now, Zug was very dear to his heart, although she had been his wife for a year; but the etiquette of the tribe prohibited internal theft, whilst unprovoked assassination was sternly and painfully revenged. For even in those joyous days a rude kind of club-law prevailed. Unless a tribe were exceptionally large and powerful, internal murder was a luxury in which only the greatest chiefs could indulge.

Soon Zug taunted Ug again with the



"Mug speedily abandoned his honest calling in order to devote himself to music."

it, and she could feel them plainly through the layers of skins.

"Such is marriage," thought Zug discontentedly. "Six moons ago he would have taken the lumpy side himself. Had I asked him for a whole girdle of pebbles when I was a maid, he would have got it for me."

Then the baby felt a boulder in *his* back and began to whimper.

"My precious bit of blubber," she cooed in swift remorse, and turned the discontented infant the other side uppermost. His little stomach fitted better into the lump of boulder; the child slept. Thus, in the pride



"It was a critical moment in the history of music."

shameful nudity of her neck, but his retort came pat.

"The man Mug does not love strife," he said. "He gives me no reason to slay him."

"Thrice she has made a bonfire when the wind blew from the forest," replied Zug.

"For that I dare not club him, but I will order him to do it no more."

Zug's sole reply was a petulant snort. She knew that Mug would put a stop to the nuisance. Presently she sidled up to Ug.

"I know a way by which you could provoke him," she whispered tenderly.

"How?" he asked incredulously.

"Listen," she said, as she nestled to his breast. "The sun grows hot, and soon that woman will begin to swim in the sea. Then I will find means to take the necklace from her, for she will not let the water touch it, I am sure."

"It is forbidden to seize the goods of a friend," objected Ug.

"They will not know who has taken it," she argued.

"But they will suspect us."

"Yes," said Zug eagerly, "and she will make Mug accuse us of the theft. We can deny it, and if I hide the necklace in the secret crevice, who shall find it?"

"Well?" said Ug doubtfully.

"Then you can club them both," she concluded simply. "The Chiefs will hold that he provoked you sorely."

Now, Ug was anxious to please his wife and restore her happiness, but the more he reflected upon her scheme, the less he liked it. He felt no enmity against his harmless neighbour, besides which he was more conventional than his wife, and harboured a prejudice against internal theft. Zug was, for the period, an advanced woman. The tribal laws, she complained, were made by the men and with scant regard for the interests of the weaker sex. Her inordinate craving for the necklace increased her contempt for the laws. She was seriously piqued, too, by Ug's refusal to oblige her in so trifling a matter as the duly provoked assassination of a neighbour whose wife made offensive bonfires.

Thus coolness arose between Ug and his lady. Their conjugal happiness might have been blasted but for the happy chance that Mug made a drum and began to play upon it. It was, I need hardly say, a rude and primitive instrument, and Mug played it badly. Still, it was the first drum ever heard in this country, and Mug was the first musician—the ancestor of the long-haired race that has since multiplied excessively

throughout the world. Within a short time Mug achieved local celebrity by his execrable playing, and he began to suffer from the complaint that has made such terrible ravages in the modern artistic world. In brief, he got a "swollen head."

If space permitted, it would be valuable to trace here all that legend records of the moral decline of this prehistoric drummer. I can only tell you, however, that Mug speedily abandoned his honest calling in order to devote himself to music. After his astonishingly successful *début*, on the occasion of a sacrificial feast, he never disembowelled another quadruped. Yet he had been skilled in that useful speciality, having been trained to it from boyhood. At first he was content to play at mere family gatherings, and accepted moderate payment; but, as his inflated reputation increased, his charges became so heavy that a considerable audience was needed to defray them. On the memorable occasion when old Sux, the Chief of the tribe, celebrated the birth of his fiftieth child, Mug charged two hindquarters of reindeer, half a woman-load of the best blubber, and a child-load of bear's grease. Mrs. Mug also grew inflated with vanity, sat beside him when he played, and sported her pebble necklace most offensively.

The tribe began to distinguish between the artist and his art, and Mug's wealth and luxurious mode of gorging himself earned him many enemies. The man was parsimonious and did not entertain.

At one Council meeting there was some talk of paying Mug a fixed tribal salary, and of obliging him to drum for eight hours a day. But the motion was not carried, owing to jobbery on the part of Mug.

The Mugs still resided in the cavern opposite the Ugs, for you will understand that Mug had splashed into fame headlong, and that desirable caves seldom fell vacant. Whether from real love of art, or mere greed, Mug practised strenuously. Artist like, he kept late hours, and often, when indigestion prevented sleep, he would drum till ten o'clock. Ug, though not insensible to the genius of his neighbour, soon grew restive under the din, and presently irascible. As a keen hunter, he usually went to bed with the sun—at least, figuratively.

Zug noted the growing irritability of her lord with great expectations. Often the drumming awoke the baby and made it howl. When it failed, Zug used to pinch the child. At length Ug awoke one night in a great rage.

"That beastly child makes more din than the drum," he complained.

Zug (who had recently pinched it) clasped the babe protectingly to her breast.

"Mug is the destroyer of sleep," she said. "Were I a man, I would take away his drum."

Without reply, Ug rose and quitted the cave, leaving Zug in disturbing suspense. "Had he left her, or gone to act upon her advice?"

But in a few minutes he returned, carrying the drum, and followed by the Mugs.

"Gimme back my drum, you crocodile!" wailed the outraged artist.

"For two fishbones," said Ug, "I'd smash it up with my club, and you too."

"No, no," entreated Mug. "Hold your Philistine hand. Club me, but spare my——" Emotion choked the rest.

"Your wife?" asked Ug.

"My drum!" shrieked Mug unchivalrously.

"Destroy the drum," urged Zug, "for then shall my lord dream sweetly."

Ug raised his club to strike. It was a critical moment in the history of music, for the hunter was quite unmoved by the agonised prayers of the Mugs. A moment later the club would have fallen, and the evolution of music must have been arrested for centuries. We of the Twentieth Century, for example, might now regard "Haydn's Surprise" as the greatest triumph of musical composition. We assuredly should not have advanced so high in culture as to be able to accord national appreciation to "Pretty Little Pansy Faces." But at this awful prehistoric moment (what a subject for the "story" painters!) Zug caught the club-arm of her husband.

"Hold, my lord!" she exclaimed.

Ug, who was really a very polite husband for those times, humoured her by pausing.

"Well?" he asked. "What now, my lake-eyes?"

"Let her give up the necklace, and we will spare the drum," said Zug.

Mrs. Mug's nails itched for vengeance. Her face grew distorted by passion, and she hurled opprobrious prehistoric epithets at her crafty neighbour.

"Give up the gaud!" snarled Mug.

His wife slipped the necklace over her head and threw it upon the floor of the cave.

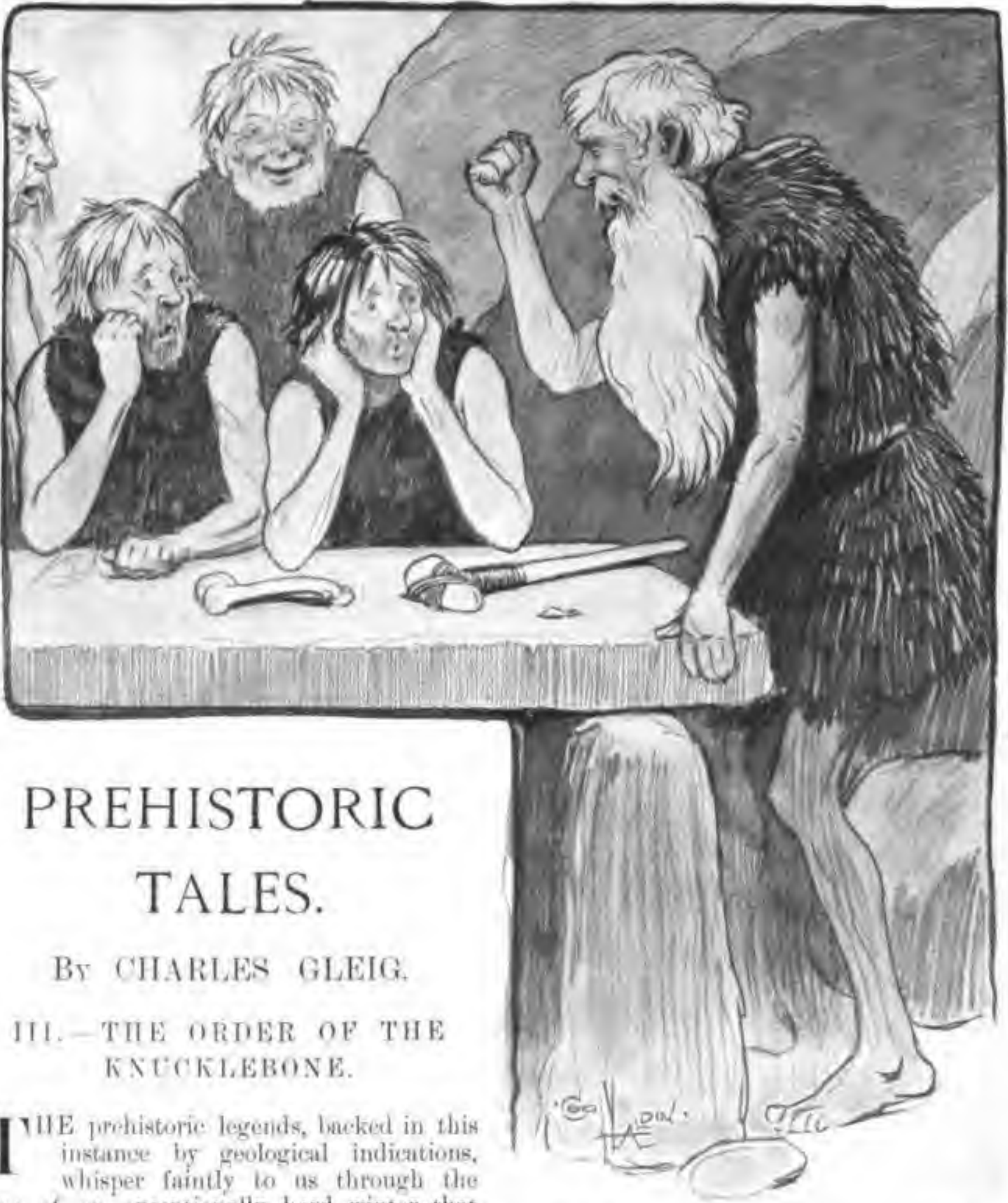
"Now give me my drum!" cried Mug suspiciously.

"Yes," said Ug, "take it; but dare to play by night again, and I will beat both you and drum into fragments no bigger than my son's thumb!"

Thus the fair Zug obtained her heart's desire, and peace was restored to the cave of Ug.



"Thus the fair Zug obtained her heart's desire, and peace was restored to the cave of Ug."



PREHISTORIC TALES.

By CHARLES GLEIG.

III.—THE ORDER OF THE KNUCKLEBONE.

THE prehistoric legends, backed in this instance by geological indications, whisper faintly to us through the ages of an exceptionally hard winter that prevailed during the early manhood of Ug. This terrible winter is thought to have continued in Britain during five or ten years, and is attributed by geologists to the encroachments of the Northern ice-cap, now deservedly banished by His Celestial Majesty the Sun, to the polar regions. During this long winter the Sux tribe, like others in these latitudes, suffered from a certain deficit of revenue. Reindeer, as we should say nowadays, grew "tight," although no aspersion upon the morals of a well-

"They had passed through a long period of gastronomic depression."

conducted species is intended. Indeed, everything was tight, and the market value of skins rose enormously. Undressed suits for the men became very fashionable, whilst the brief beginnings of the female skirt may be clearly traced to the encroachments of the ice-cap. Skirts went out of fashion again during the "warm" age, commencing about 9980 B.C., the ladies of West Britain reverting then to necklaces, ornate belts, and hairpins. I merely mention this fact in passing, to show that fashions in costume

have been but slightly influenced by prudery, and very materially by climate.

After some six months on a diet of salted meat, the young men of the tribe grew so discontented that old Sux felt it politic to organise a raid. He was growing infirm and rheumatic, having resided for over half a century in hollow trees and damp caves. It is quite a mistake to suppose that prehistoric man lived to a green old age. He usually died a violent death in his prime; and if he survived the flint hatchets of the enemy, he perished a few years later from pneumonia or consumption, or was unintentionally poisoned by the medicine man of the tribe. The medical degree was difficult to secure even in Ug's day, but when secured, it was deadly. In the Sux tribe, for example, a high fever was treated with cold douche and double rations; and if the illness terminated fatally—as it usually did—the medical practitioners could always put the blame upon malevolent spirits. British dames thought twice about calling in the doctor ages ago.

Some neighbour had to be raided, it grew evident; and the old Chief favoured an attack upon the Muk tribe, whilst Ug and several of the younger chiefs fancied an excursion into Wales.* Old Sux was growing timid, and discouraged distant expeditions. In the absence of all the young warriors, the old men and the women-folk were exposed to considerable risks.

* These modern names are retained for convenience; the prehistoric name for Wales was Taff-mo, or, as we should say, Taffyland.

Secondly, he dwelt upon the *entente* which had lately prevailed between the Sux and Muk tribes. The Muks, he argued, would be unprepared. His third reason old Sux kept to himself. The Muks were rather short of young women, and the Chief felt it



"As he went through the skull-splitting exercises."

desirable to guard against alien importation during a period of dearth; besides, he did not admire the Muk type of beauty, the ladies being rather slender.

Ug had been urged by his wife to support the foreign policy of the Chief. She was, you may remember, one of his thirty-three daughters; but filial duty did not greatly



"The Order of the Knucklebone."

influence her. She had heard that the Welsh women were beautiful, and this greatly simplified her desire for a Muk raid.

"Don't support the Welsh raid, my lord," she had said. "Your little lake eyes would be so anxious if her beloved Ug had to cross the treacherous ice."

"The Channel is as hard as the heart of a Taff," he assured her.

To content her, however, Ug had promised to support the Chief. The debates in Council were strictly confidential, so that he could vote either way without Zug being any the wiser. Indeed, it was largely due to Ug's influence that the young chiefs at the Council threw out the Muk Raid Bill, and decided upon the Welsh punitive expedition. This being settled, Ug, in a soldierly speech, urged that every other warrior (he meant to be one of the others himself) should carry a young pine tree across the frozen channel. He showed how these could be formed into rafts, if the raiders should happen to strike open water, and so enable them to pass in relative safety to the next ice-field. It was an inspiration of the highest prehistoric military (or, perhaps, naval) genius. And Ug's strategic plan was received with acclamation, for every warrior hoped that his neighbour would be let in for the pine portage. One sees in this plan the genius of Ug. Had he proposed that all should carry wood, the Council would have disparaged his strategy.

Despite the scarcity of provisions, old Sux ordered a State banquet in honour of the raid, and it was held the same evening on the beach. He made the necessary issues of food with reluctance, but the conventions had to be observed. The Chief was growing parsimonious in his age. In generous youth there had been gorges in his cave which were still remembered with enthusiasm; indeed, prior to his election as Head Chief, Sux had even given public feasts, and dispensed bear soup to the aged during hard winters. The Chief was sagacious, and had been a mighty performer with flint hatchets in his prime. Perhaps the burden of a large family may have sapped his liberality in these declining years. He drew a tenth share of all plunder earned by the warriors, but was expected to reward meritorious achievement or conspicuous bravery out of his own larder.

The tribal feast was only a moderate success, for there was some grumbling among the warriors owing to the scarcity of preserved blubber, whilst a deficiency of

oil was resented by the women. Sux, however, bluffed many of the guests by the heartiness of his after-dinner speech, and his confident prediction that the raid would prove not only a military triumph, but a commercial success. They had passed, he said, through a long period of gastronomic depression; but the High Priest and his virtuous assistants were in frequent communication with the ancestors of the tribe, and all the portents were favourable to the raid. The great Jim-Jam (the chief idol of the Suxes) had thrice nodded his head when humbly consulted by the High Priest. In mentioning this very encouraging portent, the Chief hoped that he was not being too frank. ("Go on!" shouted the young warriors encouragingly.) But there were other portents, known to the Council, as to which he (old Sux) was bound to exercise reticence. He concluded by proposing the health of Ug ("his valiant son-in-law"), to whose skilful leadership the tribe had previously owed many a banquet and not a few consignments of slaves.

The next day was devoted to sleeping off the effects of the banquet and to raiding preparations. The heart of many an unfledged youth beat high as he went through the skull-splitting exercises and watched, with the tail of his eye, the admiring glances of the maidens.

At dawn the raiders started, looking, as they disappeared in the fog, like a band of animated scaffolding poles.

It is best to omit a description of the raid, since the gallant deeds of the Sux warriors on the Welsh coast might seem barbarous to modern readers. Let it suffice to say that a prosperous tribe, residing near the place now called Penarth, was successfully surprised, slaughtered, and despoiled. All were flinted or clubbed, except a score of men, the belles of the tribe, and a select few of the younger matrons. On the fourth day the raiders returned, well supplied with foreign food-stuffs, skins, and weapons. Their spoils were carried by the male prisoners, who were afterwards sacrificed to Jim-Jam with much ceremony. One tenth of the booty, including livestock, was duly commandeered by old Sux, another tenth by the priests; and a week or so was pleasantly passed in feasting and sacrificing the male prisoners. It was a very enjoyable time for the Suxes. Ug was happy, for he had increased his military reputation, and felt that he had mounted a long step nearer to the goal of his ambitions. His aim was to succeed old

Sux, none of whose sons inherited the sagacity of the Chief.

But when the revels were ended, Ug very naturally began to consider how large a share of the plunder would be allotted to him in

nor expect the tribe to provide for his family for three generations.

At length Sux assembled the tribe and, having perched himself upon a high boulder, began a long speech. His subjects squatted round him in a circle, the ladies, according to the custom of that robust age, taking back seats, thankful to get even standing room. They wore their best furs and feathers, for the weather was still terribly cold, despite the cheering forecasts of the High Priest. Zug wore the famous pebble necklace *outside her fur collar*. The girls without necklaces, who predominated, said it was vulgar ostentation, but Zug did not care.

In the course of his long-winded speech, the Chief so warmly eulogised the genius of Ug that the gallant young raider would scarcely have felt surprised had two-tenths of the plunder been voted to him. The parsimonious old Chief had devised a more economical plan of rewarding military prowess, and his sage example has been followed by monarchs and governments ever since.

Concluding with a gorgeous bouquet of eulogy, Sux produced from his skins the knucklebone of a reindeer, to which was attached some three feet of sinew.

"Know, O tribesmen!" he said, "that I, your Chief and trusted Councillor, have this day established the Honourable Order of the Knuckle-

bone. Upon my beloved kinsman I bestow the insignia of the Order, which henceforth he shall wear around his neck as a token to all men of his valour and genius in war. I direct, further, that this mighty warrior shall be addressed as 'Ug, wearer of the Knucklebone!'"



"Did him the honour of rubbing noses."

recognition of his public services. These primitive, prehistoric patriots must not be judged by modern ethical standards. Nor, indeed, were Ug's desires conspicuously immoderate. He did not dream of claiming 100,000 pounds of salt meat, for example,

Thus saying, Sux passed the loop of sinew over the head of his perplexed relative and did him the honour of rubbing noses. Thereat a great whoop of acclamation burst from the tribesmen, and—as previously arranged by the wily Chief—a band of pretty maidens, waving feathers and glistening with the best oil, clustered around Ug and paid him homage.

When he had obtained silence, Sux went on to say that "Wearers of the Knucklebone" would be expected to give a feast to the tribe—a rule which was very well received by all, except Ug.

Ug, in his reply, said he was too much overcome by his feelings to be able to express fully the rapture he experienced in becoming a wearer of the distinguished Order. He felt, he confessed, rather lonely on his pinnacle of fame, and hoped that other patriots would speedily be exalted by their gracious Chief. Having kissed the Chief's left elbow, he sat down amidst whoops and yells that might have been audible at Penarth but for the death of the inhabitants of that charred and gutted settlement.

Later in the day, the wearer of the honourable Order sought a private interview with the Chief, and found him in his cave.

Sux rose and courteously offered his visitor half-a-pound of blubber on a skewer.

Ug, curtly refusing the refreshment (a serious breach of etiquette), plunged into his grievance. The Chief heard him with some patience. He could afford to make allowances for Ug's disappointment.

"My dear boy," he said at last, "I can understand your discontent, though you hid it very creditably in public."

"When you let me in for a feast," said Ug, "I could hardly keep my scraper off your august person. That, at least, you might have spared me."

"Son-in-law, be comforted," replied Sux. "The day will come when you will rule over this greedy tribe, and then, believe me, you will feel more grateful to me than you do this evening."

"Shall I indeed succeed you, O Chief?" said Ug.

"I swear it!" replied old Sux, and laid his nose kindly against that of his kinsman.

Breaking the nasal contact, the Chief again spoke words of wisdom that sank like a flint arrow-head into the mind of the young general.

"Ug, my friend," concluded the Chief, "you will save a lot of good food and plunder, after I am gone, by this honourable Order. For knucklebones are many, O Ug, and plunder is always scarce."

HIS ARROGANCE OF ARCADY.

THERE is hardly a sign of leaf or blossom,
But burnished buds shine purple and brown;
The starling's mail has its early gloss on,
And Daffydowndilly has come to town.

The missel-thrush is in finest feather,
With russet back and with mottled breast;
Still through the storm and the rough Spring weather
We hear his voice above all the rest.

We'll soon forget there was ever a bare tree—
"Spring is coming! Oh, Spring is here!"
Loud he sings in the gaunt old pear-tree,
Boldest herald of all the year.

See him bathing in lordly leisure,
While sparrows watch from the fountain's rim;
Even the robins wait his pleasure,
None so rash as to challenge him.

He is the lawn's Lord High Comptroller:
If you surprise him down by the fir,
Cracking a snail on the old stone roller,
Off he flies with an angry whirr-r-r!

But I think it is *he* should beg our pardon,
For we let him build in our ivy bowers,
Though he sings in our cross old neighbour's garden
More, far more, than he sings in ours.

ROSAMUND MARRIOTT WATSON.

THE ABSENT-MINDED COTERIE.

By ROBERT BARR.



ONCE upon a time I had the unique experience of pursuing a man for one crime and getting evidence against him of another. He was innocent of the misdemeanour the proof of which I sought, but was guilty of a serious offence; yet he and his confederates escaped scot free, in circumstances which I now propose to relate.

I well remember that November day, because there was a fog so thick that two or three times I lost my way, and there was not a cab to be had at any price. The few *voitures* then in the street had no drivers on the box; the cabmen were leading their animals slowly along, making for their stables. It was late when I reached my flat, and after dining there, which was an unusual thing for me to do, I put on my slippers, took an easy-chair before the fire, and began to read my evening journal.

I had allowed my paper to slip to the floor, for in very truth the fog was penetrating even into my flat, and it was becoming difficult to read, notwithstanding the electric light. My man came in and announced that Mr. Spenser Hale, of Scotland Yard, wished to see me, and, indeed, on all nights, but especially that one, I am more pleased to converse with a man than to read a newspaper.

"*Mon Dieu*, my dear Monsieur Hale, it is surely an important thing that brought you out on such a night as this. The fog must be very thick in Scotland Yard."

This delicate shaft of fancy completely missed him, and he answered stolidly—

"It's thick all over London—and, indeed, throughout most of England."

"Yes, it is," I agreed, but he did not see that, either.

Still, a moment later he had made a remark which, if it had come from some people I know, might have indicated a glimmer of comprehension.

"You are a very, very clever man, Monsieur Valmont, so all I need say is that the question which brought me here is the same as that on which the American election was fought. Now, to a countryman, I should be compelled to give further explanation, but to you, monsieur, that will not be necessary."

There are times when I dislike that crafty smile and that partial closing of the eyes which always distinguishes Spenser Hale when he places on the table a problem which he expects will baffle me. If I said he never did baffle me, I would be wrong, of course, for sometimes the utter simplicity of the puzzles which trouble him leads me into an intricate involution entirely unnecessary in the circumstances.

I pressed my finger-tips together and gazed for a few moments at the ceiling. Hale had lit his black pipe, and my silent servant had placed at his elbow the whisky-and-soda, and then had tip-toed out of the room. As the door closed, my eyes came from the ceiling to the level of Hale's expansive countenance.

"Have they eluded you?" I asked quietly.

"Who?"

"The coiners."

Hale's pipe dropped from his jaw, but he managed to catch it before it reached the floor. Then he took a gulp from the tumbler.

"That was just a lucky shot," he said.

"*Parfaitement*," I replied carelessly.

"Now, own up, Valmont, wasn't it?"

I shrugged my shoulders. A man cannot contradict a guest in his own house.

"Oh, stow that!" cried Hale impolitely. He is a trifle prone to strong and even slangy expressions when puzzled. "Tell me how you guessed it."

"It is very simple, *mon ami*. The question on which the American election was fought is the price of silver, which is so low that it has ruined Mr. Bryan, and threatens to ruin all the farmers of the West who have silver-mines on their farms. But how does that affect England and Scotland Yard? you may ask. In two ways. Someone has stolen bars of silver, let us say. But that was done three months ago, when the metal was being

unloaded from the German steamer at Southampton, and my dear friend Spenser Hale ran down the thieves very cleverly as they were trying to dissolve the marks off the bars with acid. Now, crimes do not run in series, like the numbers in roulette at Monte Carlo. The thieves are men with brains. They say to themselves: 'What chance have we to steal bars of silver while Mr. Hale is at Scotland Yard?' Eh, my good friend?"

"To tell the truth, Valmont," said Hale, taking another sip, "sometimes you almost persuade me you have reasoning powers."

"Thanks, comrade. Then it is not a theft of silver we have now to deal with. It must be coinage, and there the low price of silver comes in. You have, perhaps, found a more subtle crime going forward than heretofore. They are making your shillings and your half-crowns from real silver instead of from baser metal, and yet there is a large profit, which has not hitherto been possible through the high price of the metal. With the old conditions you were familiar, but this new element sets at naught all the ancient formulæ."

"Well, Valmont, you have hit it. I'll say that for you, you have hit it. There is a gang of expert coiners who are putting out real silver money, and making a clear shilling profit on the half-crown. We have no trace of the coiners, but we know the man who is shoving the stuff."

"That ought to be sufficient," said I.

"Yes, it should, but it hasn't proven so up to date. Now, I came up to-night to see if you would do one of your French tricks for us, right on the quiet."

"What French trick, Monsieur Spenser Hale?" I inquired with some asperity, forgetting for the moment that the man invariably became impolite when he grew excited.

"No offence intended," said this blundering person, who really was a good-natured fellow, but would always put his foot in it, and then apologise. "I want someone to go through a man's house without a search-warrant, spot the evidence, let me know, and then we'll rush the place before he has time to hide his tracks."

"Who is this man, and where does he live?"

"His name is Ralph Summertrees, and he lives in a very natty little bijou residence, as the advertisements call it, situated in no less a fashionable place than Park Lane."

"I see. What has aroused your suspicions against him?"

"Well, you know, that's an expensive district to live in—it takes a bit of money to do the trick. This Summertrees has no ostensible business, yet every Friday he goes to the United Capital Bank in Piccadilly, and deposits a bag of swag, usually all silver coin."

"Yes, and this money——?"

"This money, so far as we can learn, contains a good many of these new pieces which never saw the British Mint."

"It's not all new coinage, then?"

"Oh, no, he's a bit too artful for that. You see, a man can go round London with his pockets filled with new coinage five-shilling pieces, buy this, that and the other, and still come home with his pockets well filled with legitimate coins of the realm; twos, half-crowns, shillings, sixpences, and all that."

"I see. Then why don't you nab him one day when his pockets are full of the illegitimate five-shilling pieces?"

"That could be done, of course, and I've thought of it; but, you see, we want to land the whole gang. Once we arrested him, without knowing where the money came from, the real coiners would take flight."

"How do you know he is not a real coiner himself?"

Now, poor Hale is easy to read as a book. He hesitated before answering this question, and looked confused as a culprit caught in some dishonest act.

"You need not be afraid to tell me," I said soothingly, after a pause. "You have had one of your men in Mr. Summertrees' house, and have learned that he is not the coiner. But your man has not succeeded in getting evidence to incriminate other people."

"You've about hit it, Monsieur Valmont. One of my men has been Summertrees' butler for two weeks, but, as you say, he has found no evidence."

"Is he still butler?"

"Yes."

"Now tell me how far you have got. You know that Summertrees deposits a bag of coin every Friday in the United Capital, and I suppose the people at the bank have allowed you to examine one or two of the bags."

"Yes, sir, they have; but, you know, banks are very difficult to deal with. They don't like detectives bothering about, and whilst they do not stand against the law, still, they never



"The cabmen were leading their animals slowly along."

answer any more questions than they're asked, and Mr. Summertrees has been a good customer at the United Capital for many years."

"Haven't you found out where the money comes from?"

"Yes, we have: it is brought to Park Lane night after night by a man who looks like a respectable City clerk, and he puts it into a large safe, of which he holds the key, this safe being on the ground floor in the dining-room."

"Haven't you followed this clerk?"

"Yes. He stops in the Park Lane house every night, and goes up in the morning to an old curiosity shop in Tottenham Court Road, where he stays all day, returning with this bag of money in the evening."

"Why don't you arrest and question him?"

"Well, you see, Mr. Valmont, there is just the same objection to his arrest as there is to that of Summertrees. We could easily arrest them both, but we have not the slightest evidence against either of them, and then, although we put the go-betweens in clink, the worst criminals of the lot would escape."

"Nothing suspicious about the old curiosity shop?"

"No, it appears to be perfectly regular."

"This game has been going on under your noses for how long?"

"For about six weeks."

"Is Summertrees a married man?"

"No."

"Has he any women servants in the house?"

"No, except three charwomen who come in every morning to do up the rooms."

"Of what is his household comprised?"

"There is the butler, then the valet, and, last, the French cook."

"Ah," cried I, "the French cook! This case interests me. So Summertrees has succeeded in completely disconcerting your man. Has he prevented him from going from top to bottom of the house?"

"Oh, no, he has rather assisted him than otherwise. On one occasion he went to the safe, took out the money, had Podgers—that's my chap's name—help him to count it, and then actually sent Podgers to the bank with the bag of coin."

"And Podgers has been all over the place?"

"Yes."

"Saw no signs of a coining establishment?"

"Oh, no. It is absolutely impossible that any coining can be done there. Besides, as I tell you, that respectable clerk brings the money."

"I suppose you want me to take Podgers' position?"

"Well, Mr. Valmont, to tell you the truth, I should rather you didn't. Podgers has done everything a man can do, but I thought if you got into the house, Podgers assisting, you might go through it, night after night, at your leisure."

"I see. That's just a little dangerous in England. I think I should prefer to assure myself the legitimate standing of being the amiable Podgers' successor. You say that Summertrees has no business."

"Well, sir, not what you might call a business. He is by way of being an author, but I don't count that any business."

"Oh, an author, is he? When does he do his writing?"

"He locks himself up in his study most of the day."

"Does he come out for lunch?"

"No, he lights a little spirit-lamp inside. Podgers tells me, and makes himself a cup of coffee, which he takes with a sandwich or two."

"That's rather frugal fare for Park Lane."

"Yes, Mr. Valmont, it is; but he makes up for it in the evening, when he has a long dinner, with all them foreign kickshaws you people like, done by his French cook."

"Sensible man! Well, Hale, I see I shall have pleasure in making the acquaintance of Mr. Summertrees. Is there any restriction on the going and coming of your man Podgers?"

"None in the least. He can get away either night or day."

"Very good, friend Hale. Bring him here to-morrow, as soon as our author locks himself up in his study—or, rather, I should say, as soon as the respectable clerk leaves for Tottenham Court Road, which I should guess, as you put it, is about half an hour after his master turns the key."

"You are quite right in that guess, Mr. Valmont. How did you come at it?"

"Merely a surmise, Hale. There is a good deal of oddity about that Park Lane house, so it doesn't surprise me in the least that the master gets to work earlier in the morning than the man. I have also a suspicion that Ralph Summertrees knows perfectly well why the estimable Podgers is there."

"What makes you think that?"

"I can give no reason, except that my opinion of the acuteness of Summertrees has been gradually rising all the while you were speaking, and at the same time my estimate of Podgers' craft has been as steadily declining. However, bring the man here to-morrow, that I may ask him a few questions."

Next day, about eleven o'clock, the ponderous Podgers, hat in hand, followed his chief into my room. His broad, impassive, immobile, smooth face gave him rather more the air of a genuine butler than I had expected, and this appearance, of course, was enhanced by his livery. His replies to my questions were those of a well-trained servant who will not say too much unless it has been made worth his while. All in all, Podgers exceeded my expectations, and really my friend Hale had some justification for regarding him, as he evidently did, a triumph in his line.

"Sit down, Mr. Hale, and you, Podgers."

The man disregarded my invitation, standing like a statue until his chief made a motion, then he dropped into a chair. The English are great on discipline.

"Now, Mr. Hale, I must first congratulate you on the make-up of Podgers. It is excellent. You depend less on artificial assistance than we do in France, and in that I think you are right."

"Oh, we know a bit over here, Monsieur Valmont," said Hale, with pardonable pride.

"Now, then, Podgers, I want to ask you about this clerk. What time does he arrive in the evening?"

"At prompt six, sir."

"Does he ring, or let himself in with a latch-key?"

"With a latch-key, sir."

"How does he carry the money?"

"In a little locked leather satchel, sir, flung over his shoulder."

"Does he go direct to the dining-room?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you seen him unlock the safe and put in the money?"

"Yes, sir."

"Does the safe unlock with a word, or a key?"

"With a key, sir. It's one of the old-fashioned kind."

"Then the clerk unlocks his leather money-bag?"

"Yes, sir."

"That's three keys used within as many minutes. Are they separate, or in a bunch?"

"On a bunch, sir."

"Did you ever see your master with this bunch of keys?"

"No, sir."

"You saw him open the safe once, I am told?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did he use a separate key, or one of a bunch?"

Podgers slowly scratched his head, then said—

"I don't just remember, sir."

"Ah, Podgers, you are neglecting the big things in that house. Sure you can't remember?"

"No, sir."

"Once the money is in and the safe locked up, what does the man do?"

"Goes to his room, sir."

"Where is this room?"

"On the third floor, sir."

"Where do you sleep?"

"On the fourth floor, with the rest of the servants, sir."

"Where does the master sleep?"

"On the second floor, adjoining his study."

"The house consists of four storeys and a basement, does it?"

"Yes, sir."

"I have somehow arrived at the suspicion that it is a very narrow house. Is that true?"

"Yes, sir."

"Does the clerk ever dine with your master?"

"No, sir. The clerk don't eat in the house at all, sir."

"Does he go away before breakfast?"

"No, sir?"

"No one takes breakfast to his room?"

"No, sir."

"What time does he leave the house?"

"At ten o'clock, sir."

"When is breakfast served?"

"At nine o'clock, sir."

"At what hour does your master retire to his study?"

"At half past nine, sir."

"Locks the door on the inside?"

"Yes, sir."

"Never rings for anything during the day?"

"Not that I know of, sir."

"What sort of a man is he?"

Here Podgers was on familiar ground, and he rattled off a description minute in every particular.

"What I meant was, Podgers, is he silent, or talkative, or does he get angry? Does he seem furtive, suspicious, anxious, terrorised, calm, excitable, or what?"

"Well, sir, he is by way of being very quiet—never has much to say for himself; never saw him angry or excited."

"Now, Podgers, you've been at Park Lane for a fortnight or more. You are a sharp, alert, observant man. What happens there that strikes you as unusual?"

"Well, I can't exactly say, sir," replied Podgers, looking rather helplessly from his chief to myself, and back again.

"Your professional duties have often called upon you to enact the part of butler before, otherwise you wouldn't do it so well. Isn't that the case?"

Podgers did not answer, but glanced at his chief. This was evidently a question pertaining to the service to which a subordinate was not allowed to reply. However, Hale said at once—

"Certainly, Podgers has been in dozens of places."

"Well, Podgers, just call to mind some of the other households in which you have been employed, and tell me any particulars in which Mr. Summertrees' establishment differs from them."

Podgers pondered a long time.

"Well, sir, he do stick to writing pretty closely."

"Ah, that's his profession, you see, Podgers. Hard at it from half past nine till towards seven, I imagine?"

"Yes, sir."

"Anything else, Podgers? No matter how trivial."

"Well, sir, he's fond of reading, too; leastways, he's fond of newspapers."

"When does he read?"

"I've never seen him read 'em, sir; indeed, so far as I can tell, I never knew the papers to be opened, but he takes them all in, sir."

"What, all the morning papers?"

"Yes, sir, and all the evening papers, too."

"Where are the morning papers placed?"

"On the table in his study, sir."

"And the evening papers?"

"Well, sir, when the evening papers come, the study is locked. They are put on a side table in the dining-room, and he takes them upstairs with him to his study."

"This has happened every day since you were there?"

"Yes, sir."

"You reported that very striking fact to your chief, of course?"

"No, sir, I don't think I did," said Podgers, confused.

"You should have done so. Mr. Hale would have known how to make the most of a point so vital."

"Oh, come now, Valmont," said Hale, "you're chaffing us. Plenty of people take in all the papers!"

"I think not. Even clubs and hotels subscribe to the leading journals only. You said *all*, I think, Podgers?"

"Well, *nearly* all, sir."

"But which is it? There's a vast difference."

"He takes a good many, sir."

"How many?"

"I don't just know, sir."

"That's easily found out, Valmont," said Hale, "if you think it so important."

"I think it so important that I'm going back with Podgers myself. You can take me into the house with you, I suppose, when you return?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Returning to those newspapers for a moment, Podgers—what is done with them?"

"They are sold to the ragman, sir, once a week."

"Who takes them from the study?"

"I do, sir."

"Do they appear to have been read very carefully?"

"Well, no, sir; leastways, some of them seem never to have been opened, or if they have, to have been folded up very carefully again."

"Have you noticed any clippings being made from any of them?"

"No, sir."

"Does Mr. Summertrees keep a scrap-book?"

"Not that I know of, sir."

"Oh, the case is perfectly plain," said I, leaning back in my chair, and regarding the puzzled Hale with that cherubic expression of self-satisfaction which I know is so annoying to him.

"What's perfectly plain?" he demanded, more gruffly perhaps than etiquette would have sanctioned.

"Summertrees is no coiner, nor is he linked with any band of coiners."

"What is he, then?"

"Ah, that opens another avenue of inquiry. For all I know to the contrary, he may be the most honest of men. On the surface it would appear that he is a reasonably industrious tradesman in Tottenham Court Road, who is anxious that there should be no visible connection between so plebeian an employment and so aristocratic a residence as that in Park Lane."

At this point Spenser Hale gave expression to one of those rare flashes of reason which are always an astonishment to his friends.

"That is nonsense, Monsieur Valmont," he said. "The man who is ashamed of the connection between his business and his house is one who is trying to get into Society, or else the women of his family are trying it, as is usually the case. Now, Summertrees has no family. He himself goes nowhere, gives no entertainments, and accepts no invitations. He belongs to no club, therefore to say that he is ashamed of his connection with the Tottenham Court Road shop is absurd. He is concealing the connection for some other reason that will bear looking into."

"My dear Hale, the Goddess of Wisdom herself could not have made a more sensible remark. Now, *mon ami*, do you want my assistance, or have you had enough to go on with?"

"Enough to go on with? We have nothing more than we had when I called on you last night."

"Last night, Mr. Hale, you supposed this man was in league with coiners. To-day you know he is not."

"I know you *say* he is not."

I shrugged my shoulders and raised my eyebrows, smiling at him.

"It is the same thing, Monsieur Hale."

"Well, of all the conceit——!" and the good Hale could get no further.

"If you wish my assistance, it is yours."

"Well, not to put too fine a point upon it, I do."

"In that case, my dear Podgers, you will

return to the residence of our friend, Summertrees, and I wish you to get together for me in a bundle all of yesterday's morning

place each day's papers in a pile by itself, in case they should be wanted again. There is always one week's supply in the cellar, and we sell the papers of the week before to the ragman."

"Excellent. Well, run the risk of abstracting one day's journals, and have them ready for me. I will call upon you at exactly half past three o'clock, and I want you to take me upstairs to the clerk's bedroom on the third storey, which I suppose is not locked during the daytime?"

"No, sir, it is not."

With this the patient Podgers took his departure. Spenser Hale rose when his assistant left.

"Anything further I can do?" he asked.

"Yes, give me the address of the shop in the Tottenham Court Road. Do you happen to have about you one of those new five-shilling pieces which you believe to be illegally coined?"

He opened his pocket-book and took out the bit of white metal and handed it to me.

"I'm going to pass this off before evening," I said, putting it in my pocket, "and I hope none of your men will arrest me."

"That's all right," laughed Hale, and then he went his way.

At half past three Podgers was waiting for me, and opened the front door as I came up the steps, thus saving me the necessity of ringing. The house was strangely quiet. The French cook was evidently down in the basement, and we had probably all the upper part to ourselves, unless Summertrees were in his study, which I doubted. Podgers led me directly upstairs to the clerk's room on the third floor, walking on tiptoe with an elephantine air of silence and secrecy combined which struck me as unnecessary.

"I will make an examination of this room," I said. "Kindly wait for me down by the door of the study."

The bedroom was of a respectable size when one considers the smallness of the house. The bed was nicely made up, and there were two chairs in the room, but the usual washstand and swing-mirror were not visible. However, seeing a curtain at the further end of the room, I drew it aside, and found, as I expected, a



"The hook, if pressed upwards, allowed the door to swing outwards, over the stairhead."

and evening papers that were delivered to the house. Can you do that, or are they mixed up in a heap in the coal-cellar?"

"I can do it, sir. I have instructions to

fixed lavatory in an alcove of perhaps four feet deep by five in width. As the room was about fifteen feet wide, this left two-thirds of the space unaccounted for. A moment later I opened a door which exhibited a closet filled with clothes hanging on hooks. This absorbed another five feet, leaving a third space of five feet between the clothes-closet and the lavatory. I thought at first that the entrance to the secret stairway must have issued from the lavatory, but examining the boards closely, although they sounded hollow to the knuckles, they were quite evidently plain matchboarding, and not a door. The entrance to the stairway, therefore, must be from the clothes-closet. The right-hand wall proved similar to the matchboarding of the lavatory, so far as the casual eye or touch was concerned, but I saw at once it was a door. The latch was somewhat ingeniously operated by one of the hooks, which held a pair of old trousers. I found that the hook, if pressed upwards, allowed the door to swing outwards, over the stairhead. Descending to the second floor, a similar latch let me into a similar clothes-closet in the room beneath. The two rooms were identical in size, one directly above the other, the only difference being that the lower room door gave into the study, instead of into the hall, as was the case with the upper chamber.

The study was extremely neat, either not much used, or the abode of a very methodical man. There was nothing on the table except a pile of the morning's papers. I walked to the further end, turned the key in the lock, and came out upon the astonished Podgers.

"Well, I'm blown!" exclaimed he.

"Quite so," I rejoined; "you've been tiptoeing past an empty room for the last two weeks. Now, if you'll come with me, Podgers, I'll show you how the trick is done."

When he entered the study, I locked the door once more, and led the assumed butler, still tiptoeing through force of habit, up the stair into the top bedroom, and so out again, leaving everything exactly as we found it. We went down the main stair to the front hall, and there Podgers had my parcel of papers all neatly wrapped up. This bundle I carried to my flat, gave one of my assistants some instructions, and left him at work on the papers. Then I took a cab to the foot of Tottenham Court Road, and walked up that street till I came to J. Simpson's old curiosity shop. After gazing at the well-filled windows for some time, I walked

inside, having selected a little iron crucifix, the work of some ancient craftsman.

I knew at once from Podgers' description that I was waited upon by the veritable respectable clerk who brought the bag of money each night to Park Lane, and who I made certain was no other than Ralph Summertrees himself.

There was nothing in his manner differing from that of any other quiet salesman. The price of the crucifix proved to be seven-and-six, and I threw down a sovereign to pay for it.

"Do you mind the change being all in silver, sir?" he asked, and I answered without any eagerness, although the question aroused a suspicion that had begun to be allayed—

"Not in the least."

He gave me half-a-crown, three two-shilling pieces, and four shillings, all the coins being well-worn silver of the realm. This seemed to dispose of the theory that he was palming off illegitimate money. He asked me if I were interested in any particular line of antiquity, and I replied that my curiosity was merely general, and exceedingly amateurish, whereupon he invited me to look around, which I proceeded to do, while he resumed the addressing of some wrapped up pamphlets, which I surmised to be copies of his catalogue, which he stamped for posting. He made no attempt either to watch me or to press his wares upon me. I selected at random a little inkstand, and asked its price. It was two shillings, he said, whereupon I produced my fraudulent five-shilling piece. He took it, gave me the change without comment, and the last doubt about his connection with coiners flickered from my mind.

At this moment a young man came in, who I saw at once was not a customer. He walked briskly to the further end of the shop, and disappeared behind a partition which had one pane of glass in it that gave an outlook towards the front door.

"Excuse me a moment," said the shop-keeper, and he followed the young man into the private office.

As I examined the curious, heterogeneous collection of things for sale, I heard the click of coins being poured out on the lid of a desk or an uncovered table, and the murmur of voices floated out to me. I was now near the entrance of the shop, and by a sleight-of-hand trick, keeping the corner of my eye on the glass pane of the private office, I removed the key of the front door

without a sound, and took an impression of it in wax, returning the key to its place without being observed. At this moment another young man came in and walked straight past me into the private office. I heard him say—

"Oh, I beg pardon, Mr. Simpson. How are you, Rogers?"

"Hello, Macpherson!" saluted Rogers, who then came out, bidding "Good night" to Mr. Simpson, and departed whistling down the street, but not before he had repeated his phrase to another young man entering, to whom he gave the name of Tyrrel.

I noted these three names in my mind. Two others came in together, but I had to content myself with memorising their features, for I did not learn their names. These men were evidently collectors, for I heard the rattle of money in every case; yet here was a small shop, doing apparently very little business, for I had been there for more than half an hour, and remained the only customer. If credit were given, one collector would certainly have been sufficient, yet five had come in, and had poured their contributions into the pile. Summertrees was to take home with him that night.

I determined to possess myself of one of the pamphlets which the man had been addressing. They were piled on a shelf behind the counter, and I had no difficulty in reaching across and taking the one on top, which I slipped into my pocket. When the fifth young man went down the street, Summertrees himself emerged, and this time he carried in his hand the well-filled, locked satchel, with the straps dangling. It was now approaching half-past five, and I saw he was eager to close up and get away.

"Anything else you fancy, sir?" he asked me.

"No—or, rather, yes and no. You have a very interesting collection here, but it's getting so dark I can hardly see."

"I close at half-past five, sir."

"Ah," I said, consulting my watch. "I shall have to call some other time."

"Thank you, sir," replied Summertrees quietly, and with that I took my leave.

From the corner of an alley on the other side of the street, I saw him put up the shutters with his own hands; then he emerged, with overcoat on, and the money satchel slung across his shoulder. He locked the door, tested it with his knuckles, then walked down the street, carrying under one arm the pamphlets he had been addressing. I followed him at some distance, and these

pamphlets he put into the box at the first post-office he passed, then walked rapidly to his house in Park Lane.

When I returned to my flat and called in my assistant, he said—

"After putting to one side the regular advertisements of pills, soap, and what not, here is the only one common to all the newspapers, morning and evening alike. The advertisements are not identical, sir, but they have two points of similarity—or, perhaps I should say, three. They all profess to furnish a cure for absent-mindedness; they all ask that the applicant's hobby shall be stated, and they all bear the same address—a Dr. Willoughby, in Tottenham Court Road."

"Thank you," said I, as he placed the scissored advertisements before me.

I read several of the announcements. They were small, and perhaps that is why I had never noticed any of them in the newspapers, for certainly they were odd enough. Some asked for lists of absent-minded men, with the hobbies of each, and for these lists prizes of from one shilling to six were offered. In other clippings, Dr. Willoughby professed to be able to cure absent-mindedness. There were no fees, and no treatment, but a pamphlet would be sent, which, if it did not benefit the receiver, could do no harm. The doctor was unable to see patients personally, nor could he enter into correspondence with them, and the address was the same as that of the old curiosity shop in Tottenham Court Road. At this juncture I pulled the pamphlet from my pocket, and saw it was entitled: "Christian Science and Absent-Mindedness," by Dr. Stamford Willoughby, and at the end of the article was the statement contained in the advertisement, that Dr. Willoughby would neither see patients nor hold a correspondence with them.

I drew a sheet of paper towards me, wrote to Dr. Willoughby, alleging that I was a very absent-minded man, and would be glad of his pamphlet, adding that my special hobby was the collection of first editions. I then signed myself, "Alport Webster, Imperial Flats, London, W."

I may here explain that it is often necessary for me to see people under some other name than the well-known appellation of Eugène Valmont. There are two doors to my flat, and on one of these is painted, "Eugène Valmont"; on the other is a receptacle into which can be slipped a sliding panel bearing any *nom de guerre* I choose.

The same device is arranged on the ground floor, where the names of the occupants of the building appear on the right-hand wall.

I sealed, addressed, and stamped my letter, and then I told my man to put out the name of "Alport Webster," and if I did not happen to be in when anyone called upon that mythical personage, he was to make an appointment for me.

It was nearly six o'clock next afternoon when the card of Angus Macpherson was brought in to Mr. Alport Webster. I recognised the young man as one of those who had entered the little shop carrying his tribute to Mr. Simpson the day before. He had three volumes under his arm. He spoke in a pleasant, insinuating sort of way, and I knew at once he was an adept in his profession of canvasser.

"Will you be seated, Mr. Macpherson? In what can I serve you?"

"Are you interested at all in first editions, Mr. Webster?"

"It is the one thing I am interested in," I replied, "but unfortunately they often run into a lot of money."

"That is true," said Mr. Macpherson sympathetically, "and I have here three books, one of which is an exemplification of what you say. This costs a hundred pounds. The last copy that was sold by auction in London brought a hundred and twenty-three pounds. This next one is forty pounds, and the third ten pounds. At these prices I am certain you could not duplicate three such treasures in any bookshop in Britain."

I examined them critically, and saw that what he said was true. He was still standing on the opposite side of the table.

"Please take a chair, Mr. Macpherson. Do you mean to say you go round London with a hundred and fifty pounds' worth of goods in this careless sort of way?"

"I run very little risk, Mr. Webster. I don't suppose anyone I meet imagines for a moment there is more under my arm than perhaps a trio of volumes I have picked up in the fourpenny box, to take home with me."

I lingered over the volume for which he asked a hundred pounds, then said, looking across at him—

"How came you to be possessed of this book, for instance?"

He had a fine, open countenance, and answered me without hesitation, in the frankest possible manner.

"I am not in actual possession of it, Mr. Webster. I am by way of being a connoisseur in rare and valuable books myself, although,

of course, I have little money with which to indulge in the collection of them. I am acquainted, however, with lovers of desirable books in different quarters of London. These three volumes, for instance, are from the library of a private gentleman in the West End. I have sold many books to him, and he knows I am trustworthy. He wishes to dispose of them at something under their real value, and has kindly allowed me the loan of them until to-morrow. I make it my business to find out those who are interested in rare books, and by trading I add considerably to my income."

"How, for instance, did you learn that I was a bibliophile?"

Mr. Macpherson laughed genially.

"Well, Mr. Webster, to tell you the truth, I chanced it. I do that very often. I enter a flat like this, and send in my card to the name on the door. If I am invited in, I ask the occupant the question I asked you just now: 'Are you interested in rare editions?' If he says 'No,' I simply beg pardon and retire. If he says 'Yes,' then I show my wares."

"I see," said I, nodding. What a glib young liar he was, with that innocent face of his! and yet my next question brought forth the truth.

"As this is the first time you have called upon me, Mr. Macpherson, you have no objection to my making some further inquiry, I suppose? Would you mind telling me the name of the owner of these books in the West End?"

"His name is Mr. Ralph Summertrees, of Park Lane."

"Of Park Lane? Ah, indeed!"

"I shall be glad to leave the books with you, Mr. Webster, and if you care to make an appointment with Mr. Summertrees, I am sure he will be kind enough to say a word in my favour."

"Oh, I do not in the least doubt it, and should not think of troubling the gentleman."

"I was going to tell you," went on the young man, "that I have a friend, a capitalist, who, in a way, is my supporter, for, as I said, I have little money of my own. I find it is often inconvenient for people to pay down any considerable sum. When, however, I strike a bargain, my capitalist buys the books, and I make an arrangement with my customer to pay a certain amount each week, and so even a large purchase is not felt, as I make the instalments small enough to suit my client."

"You are employed during the day, I take it?"

"Yes, I am a clerk in the City."

Again we were in the blissful realms of fiction.

"Suppose I take this book at ten pounds, what instalment should I be expected to pay each week?"

"Oh, what you like, sir. Would five shillings be too much?"

"I think not."

"Very well, sir. If you pay me five shillings now, I will leave the book with you, and shall have pleasure in calling this day week for the next instalment."

I put my hand into my pocket and drew out two half-crowns, which I passed over to him.

"Do I need to sign any form or undertaking to pay the rest?"

The young man laughed cordially.

"Oh, no, sir, there is no formality necessary. You see, sir, this is largely a labour of love with me, although I don't deny I have my eye on the future. I am getting together what I hope will be a very valuable connection with gentlemen like yourself who are fond of books."

And then, after making a note in a little book he took from his pocket, he bade me a most graceful "Good-bye" and departed, leaving me cogitating over what it all meant.

Next morning two things were handed to me: the first was a pamphlet on Christian Science and Absent-Mindedness, exactly similar to the one I had taken away from the old curiosity shop; the second was a small key made from my wax impression, that would fit the front door of the same shop—a key fashioned by an excellent

Anarchist friend of mine in an obscure street near Holborn.

That night, at ten o'clock, I was inside the old curiosity shop with a small storage battery in my pocket, and a little electric glow-lamp at my button-hole—a most useful instrument for either burglar or detective.

I had expected to find the books of the establishment in a safe, which, if it were similar to the one in Park Lane, I was prepared to open either with the false keys in my possession, or, at worst, take an impression of the keyhole and trust to my Anarchist friend for the rest. But, to my amazement, I discovered all the papers pertaining to the concern in a desk which was not even locked. The books, three in number, were the ordinary day-book, journal, and ledger referring to the shop—book-keeping of the older fashion; but in a portfolio lay half-a-dozen foolscap sheets, headed "Mr. Roger's List," "Mr. Macpherson's," "Mr. Tyrrel's," the names I had already learned, and three others. These lists contained in the first column, names; in the second column, addresses; in the

third, sums of money, and then in the small square places following were amounts ranging from two-and-sixpence to a pound. At the bottom of Mr. Macpherson's list was the name "Alport Webster, Imperial Flats, £10," then in the adjoining small square space, "five shillings." These six sheets, each headed by a collector's name, were evidently the record of current collections, and the innocence of the whole thing was so apparent that if it were not for my fixed rule



"I was inside the old curiosity shop."

never to believe that I am at the bottom of any case until I have come on something suspicious, I should have gone out empty-handed as I came in.

The six sheets were loose in a thin portfolio, but standing on a shelf above the desk were a number of fat volumes, one of which I took down, and saw that it contained similar lists running back several years. I noticed on Mr. Macpherson's current catalogue the name of Lord Semptam, an eccentric old nobleman whom I knew slightly. Then turning to the list immediately before the current one, the name was still there; so it went on back through list after list until I found the first entry, which was no less than three years previous, and there Lord Semptam was down for a piece of furniture costing fifty pounds, and on that account he had paid a pound a week for more than three years, totalling to a hundred and seventy at the least; and instantly the glorious simplicity of the scheme dawned upon me, and I became so interested in the swindle that I lit the gas, fearing my little lamp would be exhausted before my investigation ended, for it promised to be a long one.

In several instances the intended victim proved shrewder than old Simpson had counted upon, and the word "Settled" had been written on the line carrying the name when the exact number of instalments had been paid. But as these shrewd persons dropped out, others took their places, and Simpson's dependence on their absent-mindedness seemed to be justified in nine cases out of ten. His collectors were collecting long after the debt had been paid. In Lord Semptam's case the payment had evidently become chronic, and the old man was giving away his pound a week to the suave Macpherson two years after his debt had been liquidated.

From the big volume I detached the loose leaf dated 1893, which recorded Lord Semptam's purchase of a carved table for fifty pounds, and on which he had been paying a pound a week from that time to the date of which I am writing, which was November, 1896. This single document taken from the files of three years previous was not likely to be missed, as would have been the case if I had taken a current sheet. I, nevertheless, made a copy of the names and addresses of Macpherson's present clients; then, carefully placing everything exactly as I had found it, I extinguished the gas and went out of the shop, locking the door behind

me. With the 1893 sheet in my pocket, I resolved to prepare a pleasant little surprise for my suave friend Macpherson when he called to get his next instalment of five shillings.

Late as the hour was when I reached Trafalgar Square, I could not deprive myself of the felicity of calling on Mr. Spenser Hale, who, I knew, was then on duty. He was never at his best during office hours, because officialism stiffened his stalwart frame; mentally he was impressed with the importance of his position, and added to this he was not then allowed to smoke his big, black pipe and terrible tobacco. He received me with the curtness I had been taught to expect when I inflicted myself upon him at his office. He greeted me with—

"I say, Valmont, how long do you expect to be on this job?"

"What job?" I asked mildly.

"Oh, you know what I mean—the Summertrees affair."

"Oh, *that*!" I exclaimed with surprise. "The Summertrees case is already completed, of course. If I had known you were in a hurry, I should have finished everything yesterday; but as you and Podgers, and I don't know how many more, have been at it sixteen or seventeen days, if not longer, I thought I might venture to take as many hours, as I am working entirely alone. You said nothing about haste, you know."

"Oh, come now, Valmont, that's a bit thick. Do you mean to say you have already got evidence against the man?"

"Evidence absolute and complete."

"Then who are the coiners?"

"My most estimable friend, how often have I told you not to jump at conclusions? I informed you when you first spoke to me about the matter, that Summertrees was neither a coiner nor a confederate of coiners. I have convicted him of quite another offence, which is probably unique in the annals of crime. I have penetrated the mystery of the shop, and the reason for all those suspicious actions which quite properly set you on his trail. Now, I wish you to come to my flat next Wednesday night at a quarter to six, prepared to make an arrest."

"I must know who I am to arrest, and on what counts."

"Quite so, *mon ami* Hale. I did not say you were to make an arrest, but merely warned you to be prepared. If you have time now to listen to the disclosures, I am quite at your service. I promise you there

are some original features in the case. If, however, the present moment is inopportune, drop in on me at your convenience, previously telephoning, so that you may know whether I am there or not, and thus your valuable time will not be expended purposelessly."

With this I presented to him my most courteous bow, and although his mystified expression hinted a suspicion that I was chaffing him, as he would call it, official dignity dissolved somewhat, and he expressed his desire to hear all about it then and there. I had succeeded in arousing my friend Hale's curiosity. He listened to the evidence with perplexed brow, and at last ejaculated he would be blessed.

"This young man," I said in conclusion, "will call upon me at six o'clock on Wednesday afternoon, to receive his second five shillings. I propose that you, in your uniform, shall be seated there with me to receive him, and I am anxious to study Mr. Macpherson's countenance when he realises he has walked in to confront a policeman. If you will allow me to cross-examine him for a few moments—not after the manner of Scotland Yard, with a warning lest he incriminate himself, but in the free-and-easy fashion we adopt in Paris—I shall then turn the case over to you, to be dealt with at your discretion."

"You have a wonderful flow of language, Mr. Valmont," was the officer's tribute to me. "I shall be on hand at a quarter to six on Wednesday."

"Meanwhile," said I, "kindly say nothing of this to anyone. We must arrange a complete surprise for Macpherson. That is essential. Please make no move in the matter at all until Wednesday night."

Spenser Hale, much impressed, nodded acquiescence, and I took a polite leave of him.

The question of lighting is an important one in a room such as mine, and electricity offers a good deal of scope to the ingenious. Of this fact I have taken full advantage. I can manipulate the lighting of my room so that any particular spot is bathed in brilliancy, while the rest of the space remains in comparative gloom, and I arranged the lamps so that their full force impinged against the door that Wednesday evening, while I sat on one side in semi-darkness, and Hale sat on the other, with a light beating down on him from above, which gave him the odd, sculptured look of a living statue of Justice, stern and triumphant. Anyone entering the room would first be dazzled by the light, and next would see the

gigantic form of Hale in the full uniform of his order.

When Angus Macpherson was shown into this room, he was quite visibly taken aback, and paused abruptly on the threshold, his gaze riveted on the huge policeman. I think his first purpose was to turn and run, but the door closed behind him, and he doubtless heard, as we all did, the sound of the bolt being thrust in its place, thus locking him in.

"I—I beg your pardon," he stammered. "I expected to meet Mr. Webster."

As he said this, I pressed the button under my table, and was instantly enshrouded with light. A sickly smile overspread the countenance of Mr. Macpherson as he caught sight of me, and he made a very creditable attempt to carry off the situation with nonchalance.

"Oh, there you are, Mr. Webster! I did not notice you at first."

It was a tense moment. I spoke slowly and impressively—

"Sir, perhaps you are not unacquainted with the name of Eugène Valmont."

He replied brazenly—

"I am sorry to say, sir, I never heard of the gentleman before."

At this moment came a most inopportune "Haw haw!" from that blockhead Spenser Hale, completely spoiling the dramatic situation I had elaborated with such thought and care. It is little wonder the English have no drama, for they show scant appreciation of the sensational moments in life.

"Haw haw!" brayed Spenser Hale, and at once reduced the emotional atmosphere to a fog of commonplace. However, what is a man to do? He must handle the tools with which it pleases Providence to provide him. I ignored Hale's untimely laughter.

"Sit down, sir," I said to Macpherson, and he obeyed.

"You have called on Lord Semptam this week," I asked sternly.

"Yes, sir."

"And collected a pound from him?"

"Yes, sir."

"In October, 1893, you sold him a carved antique table for fifty pounds?"

"Quite right, sir."

"When you were here last week, you gave me Ralph Summertrees as the name of a gentleman living in Park Lane. You knew at the time that this man was your employer?"

Macpherson was now looking fixedly at me, and on this occasion made no reply.

"You also knew that Summertrees, of Park Lane, was identical with Simpson, of Tottenham Court Road?"

"Well, sir," said Macpherson, "I don't exactly see what you're driving at, but it's quite usual for a man to carry on a business under an assumed name. There is nothing illegal about that."

"We will come to the illegality in a moment, Mr. Macpherson. You and Rogers, and Tyrrel, and three others, are confederates in the employ of this man Simpson?"

"We are in his employ? Yes, sir; but no more confederates than clerks usually are."

"I think, Mr. Macpherson, I have said enough to show you that the game is—what you call it—up. You are now in the presence of Mr. Spenser Hale, from Scotland Yard, who is waiting to hear your confession."

Here the stupid Hale broke in with his—

"And remember, sir, that anything you say will be——"

"Excuse me, Mr. Hale," I interrupted hastily. "I shall turn over the case to you in a very few moments, but I ask you to remember our compact, and to leave this investigation for the present entirely in my hands. Now, Mr. Macpherson, I want your confession, and I want it at once."

"Confession? Confederates?" protested Macpherson, with admirably stimulated surprise. "I must say you use extraordinary terms, Mr.—Mr.—what did you say the name was?"

"Haw haw!" roared Hale. "His name is Monsieur Valmont."

"I implore you, Mr. Hale, to leave this man to me for a very few moments. Now, Mr. Macpherson, what have you to say in your defence?"

"Where nothing criminal has been alleged, Mr. Valmont, I see no necessity for defence. If you wish me to admit that somehow you have acquired a number of details regarding our business, I am perfectly willing to do so, and to subscribe to their accuracy. If you will be good enough to let me know of what you complain, I shall endeavour to make the point clear to you if I can. There has evidently been some misapprehension, but, for the life of me, without further explanation I am as much in a fog as I was on my way coming here, for it is getting a little thick outside."

Macpherson certainly was conducting himself with great discretion, and presented, quite unconsciously, a much more diplomatic figure than my friend Spenser Hale, sitting

stiffly opposite me. His tone was one of mild expostulation, mitigated by the intimation that all misunderstanding speedily would be cleared away. To outward view he offered a perfect picture of innocence, neither protesting too much nor too little. I had, however, another surprise in store for him—a trump card, as it were—and I played it down on the table.

"There!" I cried with *vim*, "have you ever seen that sheet before?"

He glanced at it without offering to take it in his hand.

"Oh, yes," he said, "that has been abstracted from our file. It is what I call my visiting-list."

"Come, come, sir!" I cried sternly; "you refuse to confess, but I warn you we know all about it. You never heard of Doctor Willoughby, I suppose?"

"Yes, he is the author of the silly pamphlet on Christian Science."

"You are quite right, Mr. Macpherson; on Christian Science *and* Absent-Mindedness."

"Possibly. I haven't read it for a long time."

"Did you ever meet this learned doctor, Mr. Macpherson?"

"Oh, yes. Dr. Willoughby is the pen-name of Mr. Summertrees. He believes in Christian Science and that sort of thing, and writes about it."

"Ah, really! We are getting your confession bit by bit, Mr. Macpherson. I think it would be better to be quite frank with us."

"I was just going to make the same suggestion to you, Mr. Valmont. If you will tell me in a few words exactly what your charge is against either Mr. Summertrees or myself, I will then know what to say."

"We charge you, sir, with obtaining money under false pretences, which is a crime that has landed more than one distinguished financier in prison."

Spenser Hale shook his fat forefinger at me and said—

"Tut, tut, Mr. Valmont: we mustn't threaten, we mustn't threaten, you know." But I went on without heeding him.

"Take, for instance, Lord Semptam. You sold him a table for fifty pounds on the instalment plan. He was to pay a pound a week, and in less than a year the debt was liquidated. But he is an absent-minded man, as all your clients are. That is why you came to me. I had answered the bogus Willoughby's advertisement. And so you kept on collecting and collecting for more



“Perhaps you are not unacquainted with the name of Eugène Valmont?”

than three years. Now do you understand the charge?”

Mr. Macpherson's head during this accusation was held slightly inclined to one side. At first his face was clouded by the most clever imitation of anxious concentration of mind I had ever seen, and this was gradually

cleared away by the dawn of awakening perception. When I had finished, an ingratiating smile hovered about his lips.

“Really, you know,” he said, “that is rather a capital scheme. The absent-minded league, as one might call them. Most ingenious. Summertrees, if he had any sense

of humour, which he hasn't, would be rather taken by the idea that this innocent fad for Christian Science had led him to be suspected of obtaining money under false pretences. But really there are no pretensions about the matter at all. As I understand it, I simply call and receive the money through the forgetfulness of the persons on my list; but where I think you would have both Summertrees and myself, if there were anything in your audacious theory, would be an indictment for conspiracy. Still, I see where the mistake arises. You have jumped at the conclusion that we sold nothing to Lord Semptam except that carved table three years ago. I have pleasure in pointing out to you that his lordship is a frequent customer of ours, and has had many things from us at one time or another. Sometimes he is in our debt; sometimes we are in his. We enjoy a sort of running contract with him by which he pays us a pound a week. He and several other customers are on the same plan, and in return for an income that we can count upon, they get the first offer of anything in which they are supposed to be interested. As I have told you, we call these sheets in the office our visiting-lists, but to make the visiting-lists complete you need what we term our encyclopædia. We give it that name because it is in so many volumes; a volume for each year, running back I don't know how long. You will notice little figures from time to time above certain amounts stated on this visiting-list. These figures refer to the page of the encyclopædia for the current year, and on that page is noted the new sale and the amount of it, as it might be set down, say, in a ledger."

"That is a very entertaining explanation, Mr. Macpherson. I suppose this encyclopædia, as you call it, is in the shop at Tottenham Court Road?"

"Oh, no, sir. Each volume of the encyclopædia is self-locking. These books contain the real secret of our business, and they are kept in the safe at Mr. Summertrees' house in Park Lane. Take Lord Semptam's account, for instance. You will find in faint figures under certain dates, 102. If you turn to page 102 of the encyclopædia for that year, you will then see a list of what Lord Semptam has bought, and the prices he was charged for them. It is really a very simple matter. If you will allow me to use your telephone for a moment, I will ask Mr. Summertrees, who has not yet begun dinner, to bring with him here the volume for 1893, and within a quarter of an hour you will be

perfectly satisfied that everything is quite legitimate."

I confess that the young man's naturalness and confidence staggered me—the more so as I saw by the sarcastic smile on Hale's lips that he did not believe a single word spoken. There was a portable telephone on the table, and as Macpherson finished his explanation, he reached over and drew it towards him. Then Spenser Hale interfered.

"Excuse me," he said, "I'll do the telephoning. What is the call number of Mr. Summertrees?"

"140 Hyde Park."

Hale at once called up Central, and presently was answered from Park Lane. We heard him say—

"Is this the residence of Mr. Summertrees? Oh, is that you, Podgers? Is Mr. Summertrees in? Very well. This is Hale. I am in Mr. Valmont's flat—Imperial Flats, you know. Yes, where you were with me the other day. Very well. Go to Mr. Summertrees, and say to him that Mr. Macpherson wants the encyclopædia for 1903. Do you get that? Yes, encyclopædia. Oh, he'll understand what it is. Mr. Macpherson. No, don't mention my name at all. Just say Mr. Macpherson wants the encyclopædia for the year 1893, and that you are to bring it. Yes, you may tell him that Mr. Macpherson is at Imperial Flats, but don't mention my name at all. Exactly. As soon as he gives you the book, get a cab and come here as quickly as possible with it. If Summertrees doesn't want to let the book go, then tell him to come with you. If he won't do that, place him under arrest, and bring both him and the book here. All right. Be as quick as you can—we're waiting."

Macpherson had made no protest against Hale's use of the telephone: he merely sat back in his chair with a resigned expression on his face which, if painted on canvas, might have been entitled "The Falsely Accused." When Hale rang off, Macpherson said—

"Of course, you know your own business best, but if your man arrests Summertrees, he will make you the laughing-stock of London. There is such a thing as unjustifiable arrest, as well as getting money under false pretences, and Mr. Summertrees is not the man to forgive an insult like that. And then, if you will allow me to say so, the more I think over your absent-minded theory, the more absolutely grotesque it seems; and if the case ever gets into the papers, I am sure, Mr. Hale, you'll have an uncomfortable half-hour with your chiefs at Scotland Yard."

"I'll take the risk of that, thank you," said Hale stubbornly.

"Am I to consider myself under arrest?" inquired the young man.

"No, sir."

"Then, if you will pardon me, I shall withdraw. Mr. Summertrees will show you everything you wish to see in his books, and can explain his business much more capably than I, because he knows more about it; therefore, gentlemen, I bid you good night."

"No, you don't. Not just yet awhile," exclaimed Hale, rising to his feet in unison with the young man.

"Then I *am* under arrest," protested Macpherson.

"You're not going to leave this room until Podgers brings that book."

"Oh, very well," and he sat down again.

And now, as talking is dry work, I set out something to drink, a box of cigars, and packets of cigarettes. Hale mixed his favourite brew, but Macpherson, shunning the wine of his country, contented himself with a glass of plain mineral water, and lit a cigarette. Then he awoke my high regard by saying presently—

"As nothing is happening, while we are waiting, Mr. Valmont, may I remind you that you owe me five shillings?"

I laughed, took the coin from my pocket, and paid him, whereupon he thanked me.

"Have you any connection with Scotland Yard, Mr. Valmont?" asked Macpherson, with the air of a man trying to make conversation to bridge over a tedious interval; and before I could reply, Hale blurted out: "Not likely."

"You have no official standing as a detective, then, Mr. Valmont?"

"None whatever," I replied quickly, thus getting my oar in ahead of Hale.

"That is a loss to our country," pursued this admirable young man, with evident sincerity.

I began to see I could make a good deal of this young fellow if he came under my tuition.

"The blunders of our police," he went on, "are something deplorable. If they would but take lessons in stratagem, say, from France, their unpleasant duties would be so much more acceptably performed, with much less discomfort to their victims."

"France!" snorted Hale in derision. "Why, they call a man guilty there until he's proven innocent."

"Yes, Mr. Hale, and the same seems to be the case in Imperial Flats. You have

quite made up your mind that Mr. Summertrees is guilty, and will not be content until he proves his innocence. I venture to predict that you will hear from him before long in a manner that will astonish you."

Hale grunted and looked at his watch. The minutes passed very slowly as we sat there smoking, and at last even I began to get uneasy. Macpherson, seeing our anxiety, said that when he came in, the fog was almost as thick as it had been the week before, and that there might be some difficulty in getting a cab. Just as he was speaking, the door was unlocked from outside, and Podgers entered, bearing a thick volume in his hand. This he gave to his superior, who turned over its pages in amazement, and then looked at the back, crying—

"'Encyclopædia of Sport, 1893!' What sort of a joke is this, Mr. Macpherson?"

There was a pained look on Mr. Macpherson's face as he reached forward and took the book. He said with a sigh—

"If you had allowed me to telephone, Mr. Hale, I would have made it perfectly plain to Summertrees what was wanted. I might have known this mistake would have occurred. There is nothing for it but to send this man back to Park Lane, to tell Mr. Summertrees that what we want is the locked volume of accounts for 1893, which we call the encyclopædia. Here, I shall write an order that will bring it. Oh, I'll show you what I have written before your man takes it," he said, as Hale stood ready to look over his shoulder.

On my notepaper he dashed off a request such as he had outlined, and handed it to Hale, who read it and gave it to Podgers.

"Take that to Summertrees, and get back as quickly as possible. Have you a cab at the door?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is it foggy outside?"

"Not so much, sir, as it was an hour ago. No difficulty about the traffic now, sir."

"Very well; get back as soon as you can."

Podgers saluted, and left with the book under his arm. Again the door was locked, and again we sat smoking in silence until the stillness was broken by the tinkle of the telephone. Hale put the receiver to his ear.

"Yes, this is the Imperial Flats. Yes, Mr. Valmont. Oh, yes, Macpherson is here. What? Out of what? Can't hear you. Out of print. What! the encyclopædia's out of print? Who is that speaking? Dr. Willoughby?"

Macpherson rose as if he would go to the

telephone, but instead (and he acted so quietly that I did not notice what he was doing until the thing was done), he picked up his sheet which he called his visiting-list, and, walking quite without haste, held it in the glowing coals of the fireplace until it disappeared in a flash of flame up the chimney. I sprang to my feet indignant, but too late to make even a motion towards the saving of the sheet. Macpherson regarded us both with that self-depreciatory smile which had several times lighted his face.

"How dare you burn that sheet?" I demanded.

"Because, Mr. Valmont, it did not belong to you; because you do not belong to Scotland Yard; because you stole it; because you had no right to it; and because you have no official standing in this country. If it had been in Mr. Hale's possession, I should not have dared, as you put it, to destroy the sheet; but the sheet was abstracted from my master's premises by you, an entirely unauthorised person, whom he would have been justified in shooting dead if he had found you housebreaking, and you had resisted him on his discovery. I have always held that these sheets should not have been kept, for, as has been the case, if they fell under the scrutiny of so intelligent a person as Mr. Valmont, improper inferences might have been drawn. Mr. Summertrees, however,

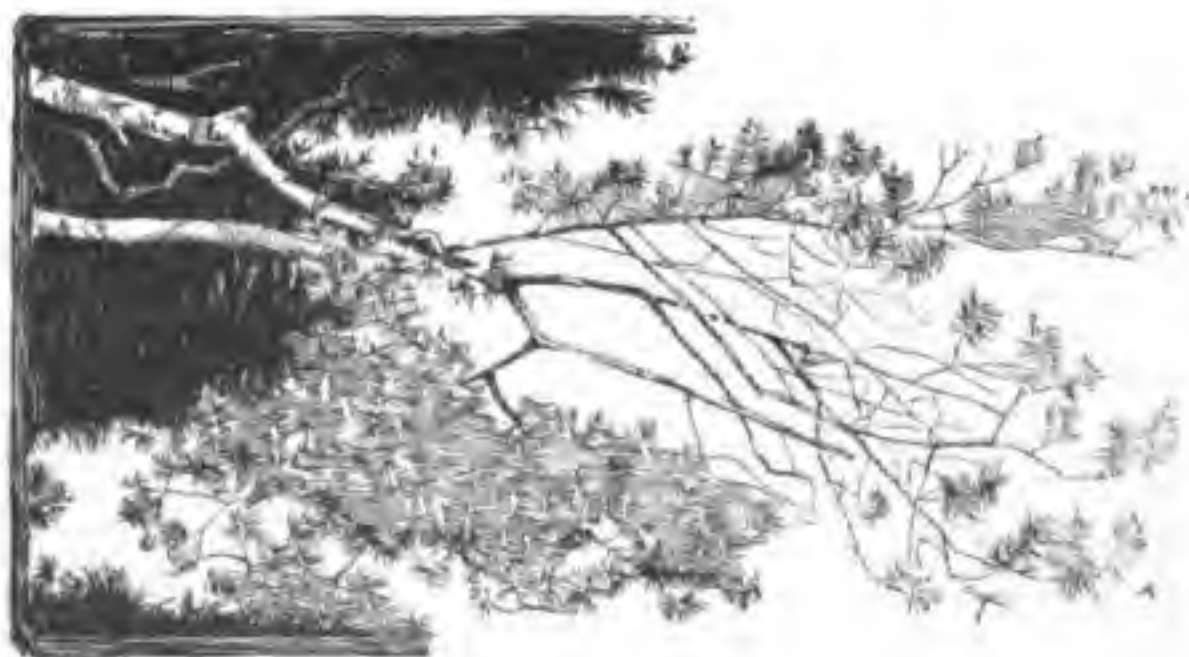
persisted in keeping them, but made this concession, that if ever I telegraphed him or telephoned him the word "encyclopædia," he would at once burn these records, and he on his part was to telegraph to me: "The encyclopædia is out of print," whereupon I would know that he had succeeded. Now, gentlemen, open this door, which will save me the trouble of forcing it. Either put me formally under arrest or cease to restrict my liberty. I am very much obliged to Mr. Hale for telephoning, and I have made no protest to so gallant a host as Mr. Valmont seems to be, because of the locked door. However, the farce is now terminated. The proceedings I have sat through have been entirely illegal, and, if you will pardon me, Mr. Hale, they have been a little too French to go down here in Old England, or to make a report in the newspapers that would be quite satisfactory to your chiefs. I demand either my formal arrest or the unlocking of that door."

In silence I pressed a button, and my man threw open the door. Macpherson walked to the threshold, paused, and looked at Spenser Hale, who sat there silent as the Sphinx.

"Good evening, Mr. Hale."

There was no reply; then, turning to me with the same ingratiating smile—

"Good evening, Mr. Valmont," he said. "I shall call next Wednesday at six for my five shillings."



THE SHADOW AND THE FLASH.

By JACK LONDON.



WHEN I look back, I realise what a peculiar friendship it was. First, there was Lloyd Inwood, tall, slender, and finely knit, nervous and dark; and then Paul Tichlorne, tall, slender, and finely knit, nervous and blond. Each was the replica of the other in everything except colour. Lloyd's eyes were black coals of fire, Paul's steel-blue jets of flame. Under stress of excitement, the blood coursed olive in the face of Lloyd, crimson in the face of Paul. But outside this matter of colouring they were as alike as two peas. Both were high-strung, prone to excessive tension and over-endurance, and they lived constantly at concert pitch.

But there was a trio involved in this remarkable friendship, and the third was short and fat and chunky and lazy, and, loth to say, it was I. Paul and Lloyd seemed born to rivalry with each other, and I to be peacemaker between them. We grew up together, the three of us, and full often have I received the angry blows each intended for the other. They were always competing, striving to outdo each other, and when entered upon some such struggle, there was no limit either to their endeavours or passions.

This intense spirit of rivalry obtained in their studies and their games. If Paul memorised one canto of "Marmion," Lloyd memorised two cantos, Paul came back with three, and Lloyd again with four, till each knew the whole poem by heart. I remember an incident that occurred at the swimming-hole—an incident tragically significant of the life-struggle between them. The boys had a game of diving to the bottom of a ten-foot pool, and holding on by submerged roots, to see which could stay under the longest. Paul and Lloyd allowed themselves to be bantered into making the descent together. When I saw their faces, set and

determined, disappear in the water as they sank swiftly down, I felt a foreboding of something dreadful. The moments sped, the ripples died away, the face of the pool grew placid and untroubled, and neither black nor golden head broke surface in quest of air. We above grew anxious. The longest record of the longest-winded boy was exceeded, and still there was no sign. Air-bubbles trickled slowly upward, showing that the breath had been expelled from their lungs, and after that the bubbles ceased to trickle upward. Each second became interminable, and, unable longer to endure the suspense, I plunged into the water.

I found them down at the bottom, clutching tight to the roots, their heads not a foot apart, their eyes wide open, each glaring fixedly at the other. They were suffering frightful torment, writhing and twisting in the pangs of voluntary suffocation! for neither would let go and acknowledge himself beaten. I tried to break Paul's hold on the root, but he resisted me fiercely. Then I lost my breath and came to the surface badly scared. I quickly explained the situation, and half-a-dozen of us went down and by main strength tore them loose. By the time we got them out, both were unconscious, and it was only after much barrel-rolling and rubbing and pounding that they finally came to their senses. They would have drowned there, had no one rescued them.

When Paul Tichlorne entered college, he let it be generally understood that he was going in for the social sciences. Lloyd Inwood, entering at the same time, elected to take the same course. But Paul had it secretly in mind all the time to study the natural sciences, specialising on chemistry, and at the last moment he changed over. Though Lloyd had already arranged his year's work and attended the first lectures, he at once followed Paul's lead and went in for the natural sciences, and especially chemistry. Their rivalry soon became a noted thing throughout the university. Each was a spur to the other, and they went into chemistry deeper than did ever students before—so deep, in fact, that, ere they took their sheepskins, they could have stumped



"Look here, Paul, you'll keep out of this if you know what's good for you!"

any chemistry or "cow college" professor in the institution, save "old" Moss, head of the department, and him even they puzzled and edified more than once. Lloyd's discovery of the "death bacillus" of the sea-toad, and his experiments on it with potassium cyanide, sent his name and that of his university ringing round the world; nor was Paul a whit behind when he succeeded in producing laboratory colloids exhibiting amœba-like activities, and when he

cast new light upon the processes of fertilisation through his startling experiments with simple sodium chlorides and magnesium solutions on low forms of marine life.

It was in their undergraduate days, however, in the midst of their profoundest plunges into the mysteries of organic chemistry, that Doris van Benschoten entered into their lives. Lloyd met her first, but within twenty-four hours Paul saw to it that he also made her acquaintance. Of course

they fell in love with her, and she became the only thing in life worth living for. They wooed her with equal ardour and fire, and so intense became their struggle for her that half the student body took to wagering wildly on the result. Even "old" Moss one day, after an astounding demonstration in his private laboratory by Paul, was guilty to the extent of a month's salary of backing him to become the bridegroom of Doris van Benschoten.

In the end she solved the problem in her own way, to everybody's satisfaction except Paul's and Lloyd's. Getting them together, she said that she really could not choose between, because she loved them both equally well; and that, unfortunately, since polyandry was not permitted, she would be forced to forego the honour and happiness of marrying either of them. Each blamed the other for this lamentable outcome, and the bitterness between them grew more bitter.

But things came to a head soon enough. It was at my home, after they had taken their degrees and dropped out of the world's sight, that the beginning of the end came to pass. Both were men of means, with little inclination and no necessity for professional life. My friendship and their mutual animosity were the two things that linked them in any way together. While they were very often at my place, they made it a fastidious point to avoid each other on such visits, though it was inevitable, under the circumstances, that they should come upon each other occasionally.

On the day I have in recollection, Paul Tichlorne had been mooning all morning in my study over a current scientific review. This left me free to my own affairs, and I was out among my roses when Lloyd Inwood arrived. Clipping and pruning and tacking the climbers on the porch, with my mouth full of nails, and Lloyd following me about and lending a hand now and again, we fell to discussing the mythical race of invisible people, that strange and vagrant people the traditions of whom have come down to us. Lloyd warmed to the talk in his nervous, jerky fashion, and was soon interrogating the physical properties and possibilities of invisibility. A perfectly black object, he contended, would elude and defy the acutest vision.

"Colour is a sensation," he was saying. "It has no objective reality. Without light, we can see neither colours nor objects themselves. All objects are black in the dark,

and in the dark it is impossible to see them. If no light strikes upon them, then no light is flung back from them to the eye, and so we have no vision-evidence of their being."

"But we see black objects in daylight," I objected.

"Very true," he went on warmly. "And that is because they are not perfectly black. Were they perfectly black, absolutely black, as it were, we could not see them—aye, not in the blaze of a thousand suns could we see them! And so I say, with the right pigments, properly compounded, an absolutely black paint could be produced which would render invisible whatever it was applied to."

"It would be a remarkable discovery," I said non-committally, for the whole thing seemed too fantastical for aught but speculative purposes.

"Remarkable!" Lloyd slapped me on the shoulder. "I should say so! Why, old chap, to coat myself with such a paint would be to put the world at my feet. The secrets of kings and courts would be mine, the machinations of diplomats and politicians, the play of tricksters, the plans of trusts and corporations! I could keep my hand on the inner pulse of things and become the greatest power in the world! And I——" He broke off shortly, then added: "Well, I have begun my experiments, and I don't mind telling you that I'm right in line for it."

A sneering laugh from the doorway startled us. Paul Tichlorne was standing there, a smile of mockery on his lips.

"You forget, my dear Lloyd——" he said.

"Forget what?"

"You forget," Paul went on—"ah, you forget the shadow."

I saw Lloyd's face drop, but he answered sneeringly: "I can carry a sunshade, you know." Then he turned suddenly and fiercely upon him. "Look here, Paul, you'll keep out of this if you know what's good for you!"

A rupture seemed imminent, but Paul laughed good-naturedly. "I wouldn't lay fingers on your dirty pigments. Succeed beyond your most sanguine expectations, yet you will always fetch up against the shadow. You can't get away from it. Now, I should go on the very opposite tack. In the very nature of such proposition the shadow will be eliminated——"

"Transparency!" ejaculated Lloyd instantly. "But it can't be achieved."

"Oh, no; of course not." And Paul shrugged his shoulders and strolled off down the briar-rose path.

This was the beginning of it. Both men attacked the problem with all the tremendous energy for which they were noted, and with a rancour and bitterness which made me tremble for the success of either. Each trusted me to the utmost, and in the long

Lloyd Inwood, after prolonged and unintermittent application, when the tension upon his mind and body became too great to bear, had a strange way of obtaining relief. He attended prize-fights. It was at one of these brutal exhibitions, whither he had dragged

me in order to tell his latest results, that his theory received striking confirmation.

"Do you see that red-whiskered man?" he asked, pointing across the ring to the fifth tier of seats on the opposite side. "And do you see the next man to him, the one in the white hat? Well, there is quite a gap between them, is there not?"

"Certainly," I answered. "They are a seat apart. The gap is the unoccupied seat."

He leaned over to me and spoke seriously. "Between the red-whiskered man and the white-hatted man sits Ben Wasson. You have heard me speak of him. He is the cleverest pugilist of his weight in the country. He is also a Caribbean negro, full-blooded, and the blackest of the black. He has on a dark overcoat, buttoned up. I saw him when he came in and took that seat. As soon as he sat down, he disappeared. Watch closely; he may smile."

I was for crossing over to verify Lloyd's statement, but he restrained me. "Wait," he said.

I waited and watched, till the red-whiskered man turned his head as though addressing the unoccupied seat; and then, in that empty space, I saw the rolling whites of a pair of eyes and the white double crescent of two rows of teeth, and for the instant I could make out a negro's face. But with the passing of the smile his visibility passed, and the chair seemed vacant as before.

"Were he perfectly black, you could sit alongside him and not see him," Lloyd said; and I confess the illustration was apt enough to make me well-nigh convinced.

I visited Lloyd's laboratory a number of times after that, and found him always deep in his search after the absolute black. His experiments covered all sorts of pigments, such as lamp-blacks, tars, carbonised vegetable matters, soots of oils and fats,



"And then was vouchsafed us the remarkable sight of an empty collar and a waving handkerchief cavorting over the fields."

weeks of experiment that followed I was made a party to both sides, listening to their theorisings and witnessing their demonstrations. Never, by word or sign, did I convey to one the slightest hint of the other's progress, and they respected me for the seal I put upon my lips.

and the various carbonised animal substances.

"White light is composed of the seven primary colours," he argued to me. "But it is itself, of itself, invisible. Only by being reflected from objects do it and the objects become visible. For instance, here is a blue tobacco-box; the white light strikes against it, and, with one exception, all its component colours—violet, indigo, green, yellow, orange, and red—are absorbed. The one exception is *blue*. It is not absorbed, but reflected. Wherefore the tobacco-box gives us a sensation of blueness. We do not see the other colours, because they are absorbed. We see only the blue. For the same reason grass is *green*. The green waves of white light are thrown upon our eyes."

"When we paint our houses, we do not apply colour to them," he said at another time. "What we do is to apply certain substances which have the property of absorbing from white light all the colours except those which we would have our houses appear. When a substance reflects all the colours to the eye, it seems to us white. When it absorbs all the colours, it is black. But, as I said before, we have as yet no perfect black. *All* the colours are not absorbed. The perfect black, guarding against high lights, will be utterly and absolutely invisible. Look at that, for example."

He pointed to the palette lying on his work-table. Different shades of black pigments were brushed on it. One, in particular, I could hardly see. It gave my eyes a blurring sensation, and I rubbed them and looked again.

"That," he said impressively, "is the blackest black you or any mortal ever looked upon. But just you wait, and I'll have a black so black that no mortal man will be able to look upon it—and see it!"

On the other hand, I used to find Paul Tichlorne plunged as deeply into the study of light polarisation, diffraction and interference, single and double refraction, and all manner of strange organic compounds.

"Transparency: a state or quality of body which permits all rays of light to pass through," he defined for us. "That is what I am seeking. Lloyd blunders up against the shadow with his perfect opaqueness. But I escape it. A transparent body casts no shadow; neither does it reflect light-waves—that is, the perfectly transparent does not. So, avoiding high lights, not only will such a body cast no shadow, but, since it reflects no light, it will also be invisible.

We were standing by the window at another time. Paul was engaged in polishing a number of lenses which were ranged along the sill. Suddenly, after a pause in the conversation, he said: "Oh! I've dropped a lense! Stick your head out, old man, and see where it went to."

Out I started to thrust my head, but a sharp blow on the forehead caused me to recoil. I rubbed my bruised brow and gazed with reproachful inquiry at Paul, who was laughing in gleeful, boyish fashion.

"Well?" he said.

"Well?" I echoed.

"Why don't you investigate?" he demanded. And investigate I did. Before thrusting out my head, my senses, automatically active, had told me there was nothing there, that nothing intervened between me and out-of-doors, that the aperture of the window-opening was utterly empty. I stretched forth my hand and felt a hard object, smooth and cool and flat, which my touch, out of its experience, told me to be glass. I looked again, but could see positively nothing.

"White quartose sand," Paul rattled off, "sodic carbonate, slaked lime, cullet, manganese peroxide—there you have it, the finest French plate-glass, made by the great St. Gobain Company, who made the finest plate-glass in the world; and this is the finest piece they ever made. It cost a king's ransom. But look at it! You can't see it! You don't know it's there till you run your head against it!"

"Eh, old boy! That's merely an object lesson—certain elements, in themselves opaque, yet so compounded as to give a resultant body which is transparent. But that is a matter of inorganic chemistry, you say. Very true. But I dare to assert, standing here on my two feet, that in the organic I can duplicate whatever occurs in the inorganic.

"Here!" He held a test-tube between me and the light, and I noted the cloudy or muddy liquid it contained. He emptied the contents of another test-tube into it, and almost instantly it became clear and sparkling.

"Or here!" With quick, nervous movements among his array of test-tubes, he turned a white solution to a wine colour, and a light yellow solution to a dark brown. He dropped a piece of litmus paper, the *rocella tinctoria*, into an acid, when it changed instantly to red, and on floating it in an alkali it turned as quickly to blue.

"The litmus paper is still the litmus paper," he enunciated in the formal manner of the lecturer. "I have not changed it into something else. Then what did I do? I merely changed the arrangement of its mole-

those you have just witnessed. But these reagents, which I shall find—and, for that matter, upon which I already have my hands—will not turn the living body to blue or red or black, but they will turn it to transparency.

All light will pass through it. It will be invisible. It will cast no shadow."

A few weeks later I went shooting with Paul. He had been promising me for some time that I should have the pleasure of shooting over a wonderful dog—the most wonderful dog, in fact, that ever man shot over, so he averred, and continued to aver till my curiosity was at fever pitch. But on the morning in question I was disappointed, for there was no dog in evidence.

"Don't see him about," Paul remarked unconcernedly, and we set off across the fields.

I could not imagine, at the time, what was ailing me, but I had a feeling of some impending and deadly illness. My nerves were all awry, and, from the astounding tricks they played me, my senses seemed to have run riot. Strange sounds disturbed me. At times I heard the swish-swish of grass being pushed aside, and once the patter of feet across a patch of stony ground.

"Did you hear anything, Paul?" I asked once.

But he shook his head and thrust his feet steadily forward.

While climbing a fence I heard the low, eager whine of a dog, apparently from within a couple of feet of me; but on looking about me I saw nothing.

I dropped to the ground, limp and trembling.

"Paul," I said, "we had better return to the house. I am afraid I am going to be ill."

"Nonsense, old man!" he answered. "The sunshine has gone to your head like wine. You'll be all right. It's famous weather."

But, passing along a narrow path through a clump of cottonwoods, some object brushed



"I covered his right leg, and he was as a one-legged man defying all laws of gravitation."

cules. Where, at first, it absorbed all colours from the light but red, its molecular structure was so changed that it absorbed red and all colours except blue. And so it goes, *ad infinitum*. Now, what I purpose to do is this." He paused for a space. "I purpose to seek—aye, and to find—the proper reagents, which, acting upon the living organism, will bring about molecular changes analogous to

against my legs, and I stumbled and nearly fell. I looked with sudden anxiety at Paul.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Tripping over your own feet!"

I kept my tongue between my teeth and plodded on, though sore perplexed and thoroughly satisfied that some acute and mysterious malady had attacked my nerves. So far my eyes had escaped, but when we got to the open fields again, even my vision went back on me. Strange flashes of vari-coloured, rainbow light began to appear and disappear on the path before me. Still, I managed to keep myself in hand, till the vari-coloured lights persisted for a space of fully twenty seconds, dancing and flashing in continuous play. Then I sat down.

"It's all up with me!" I gasped, covering my eyes with my hands. "It has attacked my eyes. Paul, take me home."

But Paul laughed long and loud. "What did I tell you?—the most wonderful dog, eh? Well, what do you think?"

He turned partly from me and began to whistle. I heard the patter of feet, the panting of a heated animal, and the unmistakable yelp of a dog. Then Paul stooped down and apparently fondled the empty air.

"Here! Give me your fist."

And he rubbed my hand over the cold nose and jowls of a dog. A dog it certainly was, with the shape and the smooth, short coat of a pointer.

Paul put a collar about the animal's neck, and tied his handkerchief to its tail. And then was vouchsafed us the remarkable sight of an empty collar and a waving handkerchief cavorting over the fields. It was something to see that collar and handkerchief pin a bevy of quail in a clump of locusts, and remain rigid and immovable till we had flushed the birds.

Now and again the dog emitted the vari-coloured light flashes I have mentioned. The one thing, Paul explained, which he had not anticipated.

"They're a large family," he said, "these sun dogs, wind dogs, rainbows, halos, and parhelia. They are produced by refraction of light from mineral and ice crystals, from mist, rain, spray, and no end of things; and I am afraid they are the penalty I must pay for transparency. I escaped Lloyd's shadow only to fetch up against the rainbow flash."

A couple of days later, before the entrance to Paul's laboratory, I encountered a terrible stench. So overpowering was it that it was easy to discover the source—a mass of putrescent matter, on the doorstep, which, in general outlines, resembled a dog.

Paul was startled when he investigated my find. It was his invisible dog—or, rather, what had been his invisible dog, for it was now plainly visible. It had been playing about but a few minutes before in all health and strength. Closer examination revealed that the skull had been crushed. While it was strange that the animal should have been killed, the inexplicable thing was that it should so quickly decay.

"The reagents I injected into its system were harmless," Paul explained. "Yet they were powerful, and it appears that when death comes they force practically instantaneous disintegration. Most remarkable! Well, the only thing is not to die. They do not harm so long as one lives. But I do wonder who smashed in that dog's head."

Light, however, was thrown upon this when a frightened housemaid brought the news that Gaffer Bedshaw had that very morning, not more than an hour back, gone violently insane, and was strapped down at home, in the huntsman's lodge, where he raved of a battle with a ferocious and gigantic beast which he had encountered in the Tichlorne pasture.

Nor, while Paul Tichlorne was thus successfully mastering the problem of invisibility, was Lloyd Inwood a whit behind. I went over in answer to a message of his to come and see how he was getting on. Now, his laboratory occupied an isolated situation in the midst of his vast grounds. It was built in a pleasant little glade, surrounded on all sides by a dense forest growth, and was to be gained by way of a winding and erratic path. But I had travelled that path so often as to know every foot of it, and conceive my surprise when I came upon the glade and found no laboratory. The quaint, red structure, with its red sandstone chimney, was not. Nor did it look as if it ever had been. There were no signs of ruin, no *débris*—nothing.

I started to walk across what had once been its site. "This," I said to myself, "should be where the step went up to the door," and barely were the words out of my mouth when I stubbed my toe on some obstacle, pitched forward, and butted my head into something that *felt* very much like a door. I reached out my hand. It *was* a door. I found the knob and turned it. And at once, as the door swung inward on its hinges, the whole interior of the laboratory impinged upon my vision. Greeting Lloyd, I closed the door and backed up the path a few paces. I could see nothing of the building. Returning and opening the door,



"I could do nothing, so I sat up, fascinated and powerless, and watched the struggle."

at once all the furniture and every detail of the interior was visible. It was indeed startling, the sudden transition from void to light and form and colour.

"What do you think of it, eh?" Lloyd asked, wringing my hand. "I slapped a couple of coats of absolute black on the outside yesterday afternoon, to see how it worked."

While he talked, he began to strip, and when he stood naked before me, he thrust a pot and brush into my hand and said: "Here, give me a coat of this."

It was an oily, shellac-like stuff, which spread quickly and easily over the skin and dried immediately.

"Merely preliminary and precautionary," he explained when I had finished; "but now for the real stuff."

I picked up another pot he indicated, and glanced inside, but could see nothing.

"It's empty," I said.

"Stick your finger in it."

I obeyed, and was aware of a sensation of cool moistness. On withdrawing my hand, I glanced at the forefinger, the one I had immersed, but it had disappeared. I moved it, and knew from the alternate tension and relaxation of the muscles that I moved it, but it defied my sense of sight. To all appearances I had been shorn of a finger; nor could I get any visual impression of it till I extended it under the skylight and saw its shadow plainly blotted on the floor.

Lloyd chuckled. "Now spread it on, and keep your eyes open."

I dipped the brush into the seemingly empty pot, and gave him a long stroke across his chest. With the passage of the brush the living flesh disappeared from beneath. I covered his right leg, and he was as a one-legged man defying all laws of gravitation. And so, stroke by stroke, member by member, I painted Lloyd Inwood into nothingness. It was a creepy experience, and I was glad when naught remained in sight but his burning black eyes, poised apparently unsupported in mid-air.

"I have a refined and harmless solution for them," he said. "A fine spray with an air-brush, and presto! I am not."

This deftly accomplished, he said: "Now I shall move about, and do you tell me what sensations you experience."

"In the first place, I cannot see you," I said, and I could hear his gleeful laugh from the midst of the emptiness. "Of course," I continued, "you cannot escape your shadow, but that was to be expected. When you pass between my eye and an object, the object disappears, but so unusual and incomprehensible is its disappearance that it seems to me as though my eyes had blurred. When you move rapidly, I experience a bewildering succession of blurs. The blurring sensation makes my eyes ache and my brain tired."

"Have you any other warnings of my presence?" he asked.

"No, and yes," I answered. "When you are near me, I have feelings similar to those produced by dank warehouses, gloomy crypts,

and deep mines. And as sailors feel the loom of the land on dark nights, so I think I feel the loom of your body. But it is all very vague and intangible."

Long we talked, that last morning in his laboratory; and when I turned to go, he put his unseen hand in mine with nervous grip, and said: "Now I shall conquer the world!" And I could not dare to tell him of Paul Tichlorne's equal success.

At home I found a note from Paul, asking me to come up immediately; and it was high noon when I came spinning up the driveway on my wheel. Paul called me from the tennis-court, and I dismounted and went over. But the court was empty. As I stood there, a tennis-ball struck me on the arm, and as I turned about, another whizzed past my ear. For aught I could see of my assailant, they came whirling at me from out of space, and right well was I peppered with them. But when the balls already flung at me began to come back for a second whack, I realised the situation. Seizing a racquet and keeping my eyes open, I quickly saw a rainbow flash appearing and disappearing and darting over the ground. I went after it, and when I had laid the racquet upon it for a half-dozen stout blows, Paul's voice rang out—

"Enough! Enough! Oh! Ouch! Stop! You're landing me on my naked skin, you know! Ow! O-w-w! I'll be good! I'll be good! I only wanted you to see my metamorphosis," he said ruefully, and I imagined he was rubbing his hurts.

A few minutes later we were playing tennis—a handicap on my part, for I could have no knowledge of his position save when all the angles between himself, the sun, and me were in proper conjunction. Then he flashed, and only then. But the flashes were more brilliant than the rainbow—purest blue, most delicate violet, brightest yellow, and all the intermediary shades, with the scintillant brilliancy of the diamond.

But in the midst of our play I felt a sudden cold chill, reminding me of deep mines and gloomy crypts—such a chill as I had experienced that very morning. The next moment, close to the net, I saw a ball rebound in mid-air and empty space, and at the same instant, a score of feet away, Paul Tichlorne emit a rainbow flash. It could not be he from whom the ball had rebounded, and with sickening dread I realised that Lloyd Inwood had come upon the scene. To make sure, I looked for his shadow, and there it was, a shapeless blotch the girth of his body (the sun was overhead) moving

along the ground. I remembered his threat, and felt sure that all the long years of rivalry were about to culminate in hideous battle.

I cried a warning to Paul, and heard a snarl as of a wild beast, and an answering snarl. I saw the dark blotch move swiftly across the court, and a brilliant burst of vari-coloured light moving with equal swiftness to meet it; and then shadow and flash came together, and there was a sound of unseen blows. The net went down before my frightened eyes. I sprang towards the fighters, crying—

"For Heaven's sake!"

But their locked bodies smote against my knees, and I was overthrown.

"You keep out of this, old man!" I heard the voice of Lloyd Inwood from out of the emptiness, and then Paul's voice crying: "Yes, we've had enough of peace-making!"

From the sound of their voices I knew they had separated. I could not locate Paul, and so approached the shadow that represented Lloyd. But from the other side came a stunning blow on the point of my jaw, and I heard Paul scream angrily: "Now, will you keep away?"

Then they came together again, the impact of their blows, their groans and gasps, and the swift flashings and shadow-movings telling plainly of the deadliness of the struggle.

I shouted for help, and Gaffer Bedshaw came running into the court. I could see, as he approached, that he was looking at me strangely, but he collided with the combatants and was hurled end over end to the ground. With one despairing shriek and a cry of "I've got 'em!" he sprang to his feet and tore madly out of the court.

I could do nothing, so I sat up, fascinated and powerless, and watched the struggle. The noonday sun beat down with dazzling brightness on the naked tennis-court. And it *was* naked. All I could see was the blotch of shadow and the rainbow flashes, the dust rising from the invisible feet, the earth tearing up from beneath the straining foot-grips, and the wire screen bulge once or twice as their bodies were hurled against it. That was all, and after a time even that ceased. There were no more flashes, and the shadow had become stationary.

The secrets of their discoveries died with Paul and Lloyd, both laboratories being destroyed by grief-stricken relatives. As for myself, I no longer care for chemical research. I have returned to my roses. Nature's colours are good enough for me.

THE NUT TREE.

A FAIRY STORY.

By M. ALISON ATKINS.



ONCE upon a time, what must happen did happen, and the old astrologer died, leaving a nephew called Lorin to inherit his great wealth and the beautiful estate which stretched from the south wall of King Skinflint's garden down to the road which led to the sea.

Lorin was an orphan, and had lived with his wise old uncle ever since he was a baby, helping with the telescopes, polishing the magic crystals, and working out sheets upon sheets of long sums. Sometimes when he had finished a longer sum than usual, the old astrologer gave him a lump of liquorice for a treat, and let him peep through the big telescope at the moon and stars. But this happened very rarely, as the astrologer said that the stars did not like strangers to look at them closely, and that liquorice was not good for young boys.

And now he was dead, and Lorin was all alone in the world, and so rich that he could have bought the king's crown itself if it had been for sale.

"I'll buy a cricket-bat," he said, looking round his treasure-room, which was full of bags of money. So, untying one of the biggest bags, he took out a handful of gold pieces and put them in his pocket, feeling very happy, for hitherto all the pocket-money he had was a farthing a quarter, and an occasional threepenny-bit from the king's son Rubylocks, who was a generous boy and liked to share his money with his friends.

"That will buy a cricket-bat and some leg-guards and ginger-beer," said Lorin, patting his pockets lovingly. "I will call Rubylocks and Maid Mignonette over the wall, and we can have a jolly game, and Mignonette can field for us."

"Spend us, lend us, give us away;
There's a million more left of us
To use another day,"

sang the gold pieces that were in the bag.

Two days later, the astrologer's heir entered his treasure-room again. "I'll buy a boat in which to row on the lake," he said, filling his pockets a second time. "And I'll buy a big lunch-basket full of pies and custard and ginger-beer, and then I will call Rubylocks and Maid Mignonette over the wall, and we can play at desert islands."

"Spend us, lend us, give us away;
There is nearly a million left of us
To use another day,"

sang the gold pieces, as he closed the door.

Three days more, and he came again. "I'll buy a yacht," he said, filling a large wallet as well as his pockets with the bright gold pieces. "I'll buy a yacht, and take Rubylocks and Maid Mignonette and heaps of people down the river, with music on board and lovely things to eat. I only had Rubylocks and Mignonette for friends before I got my money, and now I have hundreds."

"Spend us, lend us, give us away;
There is half a million left of us
To use another day,"

sang the gold pieces.

Weeks passed, and, not content with his bat, boat, and yacht, Lorin bought an air-gun, a pair of Wellington boots, a pack of hounds, three hunters, a garden-hose, a flying machine, a gipsy van with a goat to walk underneath, a barrel organ, and a knife with six blades and a corkscrew.

"Spend us, lend us, give us away;
There's a hundred thousand left of us
To use another day,"

sang the gold pieces in the treasure-room.

One day, as Lorin, Rubylocks, and Maid Mignonette, the little tomboy princess, practised the long jump, an old, old man looked over the garden fence and asked them if they could tell him the nearest way to the moon.

"Good father," replied Lorin politely, "my old uncle, the astrologer, could have told you without thinking. But I know no more about it than the man in the moon. However, if you will come to my house, we will look in my old uncle's books and see if we can find some road that would take you there."



"An old, old man looked over
the garden fence."

The old man thanked him, and the four of them entered the house, and, settling themselves in the astrologer's disused observatory, took down book after book till they were quite tired. And all to no purpose.

"It is most vexatious," said the old man, pulling his long, white beard, till Mignonette begged him to stop before he hurt himself. "You see, I am the man in the moon—or, rather, the man who should be in the moon—and I walked too near the edge early this morning, and fell over, and have been trying to find my way back ever since. I must be home before dark, or there will be nobody to light up, and then there will have to be an eclipse."

Lorin screwed up his eyes and thought hard. "When my old uncle was alive, he used to let me look through the big telescope sometimes for a treat, and the moon looked very close indeed. Perhaps you could get back that way. But I forgot; we broke the lens the other day, when we dropped down upon it in the flying machine."

"Then there will have to be an eclipse to-night, all out of season, and the tides of the sea will be disarranged, and everything will go wrong," said the man in the moon miserably. "That is what comes of growing old in the service of one's country, and losing one's foothold."

"Please don't be miserable," said Maid Mignonette. "I am sure Lorin will buy a lens if you really want to get home."

"It will take a very powerful one to get me home, I am afraid," said the poor old man doubtfully. "And powerful lenses cost money."

"Oh, that does not matter to me," replied Lorin. "Come on, Rubylocks. I'll get some money from my treasure-room, and we will soon send him home."

"Spend us, lend us, give us away;
There's twenty thousand left of us
To use another day,"

sang the gold pieces, as the two boys left the treasure-room.

"You are a good young fellow," said the man in the moon, as they fitted the new lens into place, "and I shall give you a present for your pains. I must tell you that when I met with my unfortunate accident, I was on my way to the hillside forest of the southern moon, with the intention of planting two trees in place of some that died during the last eclipse. Consequently I have the seeds in my pocket. I shall bestow the larger of the two on you in grateful recognition of your services.

Plant it in a green tub, stand it near a public footpath, water it well six times a day, and your fortune is secure."

Lorin thanked him and took the seed in his hand. It looked like an ordinary chestnut, such as we cook on winter evenings.

"Don't forget that it is valuable," repeated the man in the moon, peering up the shaft of the telescope. "Here comes my white world, and I must say 'Good-bye.'"

They watched him crawl slowly up the long, dark shaft towards the moon, which looked very near and bright. "I forgot to say," he quavered, as he was about to quit the telescope—"I forgot to say that its name is *Castanea vesca*, and it likes to have it painted on the outside of the tub. Good-bye, my dear young friends; good-bye. It is due to your kindness that I once again set foot upon my native land. Good-bye, good-bye."

The three friends watched the old man creep across the white, hilly fields of the moon, till, entering the dark shadows of a volcanic valley, he disappeared from sight. Then they went into the garden, found a tub, and, after painting it green, printed "*Castanea vesca*" on the outside, and planted the nut. And then Rubylocks and Mignonette said "Good night" and clambered over the wall into the palace gardens just in time to dress for dinner.

Several weeks passed, and Lorin grew quite famous; and King Skinflint, happening to hear from Rubylocks of his wealth and the good fun that went on in the astrologer's house, invited himself to dinner, which, of course, was a very great honour for the old astrologer's nephew.

"I will furnish the house afresh," said Lorin, entering his treasure-room with five sacks and a wheel-barrow. "I will have ivory panelling in all the rooms, and curtains of Chinese embroidery, and golden plates, and a silver fountain of attar of roses, and everything splendid that I can think of."

"Spend us, lend us, give us away;
There's just five thousand left of us
To use another day,"

sang the gold pieces.

Well, the king's dinner was such a success, and Lorin made so charming a host, that his Majesty promised to dine with him again very shortly, and bring Rubylocks and Maid Mignonette, who had just put her hair up on the top of her head, and was quite a grown-up girl.

"You are a capital fellow," said King Skinflint. "Come up to the palace to-

morrow, to afternoon tea, and I will make you a duke."

"I'll have a white velvet suit with pearl buttons," said Lorin, as he stood in his treasure-room that night. "And I'll take a diamond chain for Mignonette to wear round her neck."

"Spend us, lend us, give us away;
There's just five hundred left of us
To use another day,"

sang the gold pieces.

The next afternoon, when Lorin had taken tea with the royal family, and King Skin-flint had made him a duke, he and the princess went down the garden to look at the pine-apples and a pretty, new, sweet flower for which the head gardener wanted a name.

"If I were as rich as you, Lorin," said Maid Mignonette, "I should spend my money quite differently."

"What would you do with it?" asked Lorin.

"You must not think me ungracious if I tell you. Although I enjoyed your dinner-party ever so much, I do think it rather a waste to give treats to people such as ourselves, for we can have treats whenever we like. If I were rich like you, I should build a lighthouse to guide the sailors on the sea. Then I should give pounds and pounds to the hospital for poor, ill people. Then I should buy the beggars new clothes, to wear instead

of their rags, and buy a very large steam-roller to smooth the roads for the horses. You don't mind me telling you, do you?"

"Of course I don't," replied Lorin. "It always takes a girl to think of kind things. I shall do everything you say." Then they

looked at the pineapples and the sweet, little, new flower that wanted a name. "All the prettiest names are taken," said the princess, looking at Lorin over her handful of blossom. "It is a pity, for this is the sweetest flower that ever was."

"Let us call it 'mignonette,'" said Lorin.

Poor Lorin! When he reached home that night, he noticed how dreadfully empty his treasure-room looked, and how difficult it was to find enough gold pieces to fill his wallet.

And now comes the sad part of the

story. Lorin sent four hundred and fifty gold pieces to the hospital for poor, ill people, spent the remaining fifty in new clothes for the beggars, sold all the lovely furniture in his house, and built a lighthouse for the sailors at sea. Then he sold his flying machine and the fine, long garden-hose and bought a large steam-roller for the roads; and when all this was done, found himself with an empty house.

So, after a wild six months of splendour, Lorin found himself so poor that no one



"One of the maids of the palace, he guessed."

would come near him nor even bow to him in the street, which made him very unhappy, for he had not yet learnt what an amazing difference money makes to a man.

"I am just as tall and strong as I ever was, and my face has not changed, and I am sure I should be just as merry if only people would talk to me," he said to himself. "They treat me as though I were ill, and they were afraid to come near me."

And in this he was right. For there is nothing some folk fear so much as a poor friend.

But, as being sad and abusing people made him no richer, and gave him nothing to eat, he decided that it was wiser to work. So he worked in his great garden, growing flowers and fruit and vegetables for market, and kept things in such good order that he was able to make enough to live upon. And every day he watered the green tub where the man

in the moon's mysterious seed was lodged, and wondered if it would ever show signs of life.

Then came a long, hot summer, when the sun shone all day and there was no rain, and the garden longed for water, and Lorin, try as he might, could not keep the earth from cracking in the intense, dry heat.

"If Maid Mignonette were as sweet as her

namesake," he said mournfully, "she would never have given me up when misfortune overtook me. But as I cannot give her any more diamonds, what is the use?"

Then he sat down amid the mignonette and felt very miserable, because his flowers were dying, and he was tired, and had lost all his friends, and everything was just as wrong as it could be.

That night a dry, brown twig made its appearance above the earth in the green tub, and Lorin, as he watered it, heard a tiny voice sing: "I am *Castanea vesca*. Treat me well, and I will bring you good fortune."

The next morning, as he went round the estate with his big tank of water in a wheel-barrow, he noticed that the ground for at least fifty yards along the wall was dark and moist, as though it had been recently drenched with rain.

"How is this?" said Lorin, wiping his hot forehead. "It will save me at least three

hours' work. It must be an enemy who has done it, for it is not a bit like a friend."

Day after day the same thing happened, and at last, one morning, Lorin determined to discover his benefactor. Creeping over the lawns in the grey of the dawn, he reached a large clump of Jacob's ladder in full bloom,



"My father does not like him now, and we may not play any more."

and, crouching down on his knees, waited breathlessly.

Silence, silence beyond the wall, then a strange, slippery, slithy noise, like a serpent moving along the gravel path, then a soft scrambling and a little sigh of relief, followed by a bonnet appearing over the tips of the fruit-trees which peeped over the wall.

"Ssssssssh! Sssquish!" Oh, the sweet music of the falling diamonds of water! Lorin's cheeks flushed as he heard the exquisite drip, drip upon the hollyhock leaves and smelt the fragrance of the grateful earth.

And so his unknown friend was a girl of the palace, one of Mignonette's own maids, perhaps, working—oh, delicious thought!—under the command of the princess herself.

Now, just beyond the range of the hose, at the edge of the lawn, was a large bed of pansies and forget-me-nots, covered with blossom, but flagging sadly for want of rain. "I simply cannot reach them," said the girl in the bonnet. "They are so lovely, and they are sure to die if no one waters them."

Then, lowering the hose among the hollyhocks, she scrambled nimbly to the coping of the wall, and, after balancing herself and looking round to see that no one was in sight, hauled a ladder up after her, and, dropping it down Lorin's side of the wall, proceeded to descend to the ground.

"And now I can do much more," she said, dragging the hose towards the lawn. "You lovely pansies, you shall have just as much water as you like. Poor, hard-worked Lorin cannot possibly water such a huge garden all by himself."

Lorin's heart went bump, bump against his waistcoat, till he thought the owner of the bonnet must hear it. One of the maids of the palace, he guessed, when he first saw her over the wall. And he was right, for it was the sweetest maid of all, Maid Mignonette, the princess.

"Once a friend, always a friend,"

sang Mignonette, waving the water in flashing wreaths over the dry grass. "How pleased Lorin would be if I had time to water the whole garden before he got up! He would think it was a fairy. That clump of Jacob's ladder looks very weak. I will give it a shower-bath and make it happy."

This she did with such a will that Lorin jumped out of his hiding-place with the water streaming down his face and dripping from his shirt in such a way that made the princess anxious lest he should take cold.

"You ought not to have been there," she

said, dropping the hose and giving him both her kind little hands to kiss. "If I had known you were there, I would never have climbed over the wall. It is only girls with their hair down their back and short dresses who climb. You must try to forget it."

Lorin held her hands fast in his. "I never thought it was you, Maid Mignonette. I thought you had forgotten all about me."

"I never forget," said the princess. "At least, I forgot I was grown up when I climbed over the wall, but I don't forget friends. I was behind the wall the other day when you were talking aloud to yourself about the mignonette, and I heard all you said. But once a friend, always a friend, Lorin, and I have been seeking some way to show you that. But I ought not to be talking to you, because my father says that poor boys are dangerous—though why, I do not know—and has forbidden me to speak to you. Rubylocks would have come to see you often, only he has gone to college. I am so sorry you found me out, for now I shall not be able to help you any more, because I shall talk to you, and that will be disobeying my father."

"I will help you climb home again at once," said Lorin, who was so fond of the princess that he could not bear to think of her doing anything wrong. "Perhaps, though, you could come again and not talk, just so that we could see each other. It is so lovely to see you, Maid Mignonette."

But Mignonette shook her head. "No, that would never do. If I saw you, I should begin to talk at once. You see, Lorin, there are so many things I want to say to you that I don't want to say to anyone else. But once a friend, always a friend, and when Rubylocks comes home for the holidays, he will come and see you every day."

Lorin, happy in the thought that he and the princess were friends, after all, went about his work with a light heart, watering his flowers, re-potting his chrysanthemums, digging his potatoes, just as happily as though he were a king playing at work.

"I am *Castanea vesca*," sang the twig in the green tub that night. "I have grown five feet to-day, and, though bare and dry as a faggot, will astonish you with my fruit."

The next morning Lorin, to his amazement, found the dry twig grown to a fine branching tree, as tall as the orange trees in the tubs along the terrace-walk of King Skinflint's garden, but without the sign of flower, leaf, or bud.

"I am *Castanea vesca*," it sang. "Treat me well, and you shall have all that you desire."

And then wonders began to happen. People passing at dusk along the road that wound along the boundary of Lorin's garden declared that the astrologer's heir had inherited the wise man's curious knowledge, as well as his estate and treasure-room. For directly the sun had set, and twilight deepened into night, the bare tree in the tub which stood on the grass glowed like white fire, with stars amid the naked boughs in place of leaves. Others passing later still, when night was at its depth, spoke of a sweet voice singing among the stars, and a thread of light which fell in soft festoons from the moon into the woven branches.

"I am *Castanea vesca*," sang the tree, as Lorin lay on the grass gazing up at his treasure. "I am *Castanea vesca*, the tree of the moon, with no leaves but the stars. Once, long years ago, one of us came to earth and grew as I grow, bare in the daylight, but starry at night. Her master was not obedient, and kept her close within his gardens, where none could see her beauty. So when at last he could no longer contain his wonder and delight, and told people of his tree, they could not believe him, and called him lunatic, and shut him up away from the world; and the moon tree, deprived of his care, died. But that is too sad a story for a moonlit night. I am *Castanea vesca*, and I bring you all that you can desire."

Two days later, two of the branches blossomed strangely, and a strong wind blowing the petals away, disclosed a silver nutmeg and a large golden pear.

Now, up at the palace great festivities were in progress, for Rubylocks was home for the holidays, and the King of Spain and his daughter had come to spend a month with King Skinflint, and everyone was as busy as could be making them enjoy themselves.

The two kings were old schoolfellows, and very fond of each other, though at times the King of Spain was apt to laugh at King Skinflint's careful economy.

And as for the princesses— Well, Maid Mignonette fell head over ears in love with the Spanish princess, and said that she was the dearest child in the world, and that she would like to keep her for ever.

"My loyal highness will be velly pleased to stay wiv you," said the Spanish princess, who was not very old, and could not talk quite plainly. "You are velly plitty and velly kind, and you play games with me so

nicely. Have you anyone to play games wiv when I am not here?"

Mignonette sighed. "No, sweetheart. Now that Rubylocks goes to college I have no one. I used to have a very nice play-fellow. But my father does not like him now, and we may not play any more."

"Vat is velly sad," said the Spanish princess, stroking Maid Mignonette's cheek with her fat little hand. "When you get mallied, you will be able to play wiv anyone you like, so you must not mind velly much."

Then they started a game of fox and geese in the garden, and the Spanish princess, who always had her own way, made the two kings play with them, and the councillors and equerries, till any stranger coming into the garden would have said: "Dear me! what a very odd party!"

"And now," said the Spanish princess, when she was tired and did not wish to play any more, "you may go, and Mignonette and me and the plitty big boy wiv the led hair will sit on the glass and say fings to each nver."

"What shall we say?" asked Rubylocks.

"We will say quite new fings," declared the Spanish princess, settling herself on the grass; "and I will begin. When I went for a walk, I saw a white horse wiv a pink and blue tail, and a fairly man on his back. What did you see, Mignonette?"

"When I went for a walk, I saw a bird fly down from the clouds with a flower in his beak, which he gave to your fairy man on the white horse with the pink and blue tail. What did you see, Rubylocks?"

"When I went for a walk," said Rubylocks, "I looked over a fence and saw a little nut tree with nothing on it but a silver nutmeg and a golden pear. And that is a fact, Maid Mignonette, for it is growing in the green tub in Lorin's garden, where we planted the nut that the man in the moon gave Lorin when he went home through the telescope."

"To-morrow morning," said the Spanish princess, "my nurse and me will go for a walk and see the nut tlee. Will you come too, dear Mignonette?"

Mignonette shook her head. "No, sweetheart. My father will not let me."

"Vat is velly sad," said the Spanish princess. "But never mind. When you are mallied, you will be able to walk where you like."

The next morning as Lorin watered his garden he was surprised by a soft thumping at his gate. Opening it, he found the

Spanish princess and her nurse standing outside. "We have come to see the little nut tree wiv the silver nutmeg and the golden pear," said the princess. "Please show it us."

So Lorin led the way to the green tub by the fence where *Castanea vesca* dangled its curious fruit in the sunshine, and the Spanish princess clapped her hands and laughed with delight. "Please sit on the ground," she said to Lorin, who was too tall for her to talk to comfortably, "and tell me all about the tree."

"I had a little nut tree,
Nothing would it bear
But a silver nutmeg
And a golden pear.
The King of Spain's
daughter
Came to visit me
All for the sake
Of that little nut tree,

sang Lorin, smiling at the princess, who clapped her hands again and said that it was a velly plitty tree, and that Lorin was a velly plitty boy, and that it was a velly plitty song, and that she would go home and tell Maid Mignonette all about it. So Lorin picked her a rose for herself and a large bunch of forget-me-nots for Maid Mignonette, and then she went home.

"I am *Castanea vesca*," sang the tree, "Good fortune is on your track. Treat me well, and you shall have all that you desire."

That night the Spanish princess, who always did as she liked, told her nurse and Mignonette that she was not going to bed

yet, but was going to take the kings to see the nut tree and the boy who sang so nicely.

"Had you not better go to bed, my pet?" said the King of Spain, when she told him of her plan.

"Go to bed like a good little girl, my dear, and I will give you a whole threepenny-piece for yourself," said King Skinflint, who did not want to see Lorin.

But no, that arrangement did not suit the Spanish princess at all.

So off they went, and found Lorin in the garden, watering the nut tree.

"It is the eighth wonder of the world," declared the King of Spain, looking at it through his single eyeglass.

"My dear Skinflint, I envy you having a subject who can grow

such a tree as this. I should like a cutting, if he could spare me one."

"I am *Castanea vesca*," sang the tree. "Sell me if you will, but do not wound me."

"What will you take for it?" asked

the King of Spain, more delighted than ever when he heard it sing.

"I am *Castanea vesca*," sang the tree. "I come from the moon, where I and my sisters live on the steep hillsides amid violet shadows. I am *Castanea vesca*, and am worth



"She told him of her plan."

more than the coffers of kings can hold. Buy me with ten thousand golden pieces, each stamped with your august Spanish head, and ten thousand silver coins as pure and white as moonlight, and ten thousand copper pence as red as the sun at sunset."

"Done!" said the King of Spain to Lorin. "And, what is more, I will make you a grandee and give you four of the richest islands in the Pacific. How is that?"

"Done!" said Lorin.

Then the King of Spain took an old letter from his pocket, and scribbled the agreement on the back, and signed it himself, and made King Skinflint witness it, and gave it to Lorin.

"That will make a rich man of you, as rich men go in this country," he said, shaking hands heartily.

"And I shall be pleased to see you any day at the palace when you care to drop in to tea," said King Skinflint, also shaking hands.

"And I will have the plitty tlee in my own garden!" cried the Spanish princess, holding up her face for Lorin to kiss. "And now you can come and play wiv Mignonette."

Lorin played with Mignonette till he was twenty-one. And then they were married.

And *Castanea vesca* lived for years and years in Spain, growing taller and more

wonderful every year, till one day a tiresome, disobedient gardener's boy took a little cutting of the marvellous tree, just to see if it were possible to grow another. And being wounded, *Castanea vesca* died, though the cutting grew splendidly.

But the strange and disappointing thing was that it did not grow like its parent tree, but had a quantity of long, shiny leaves and little tails of flowers, something like the lambstails that grow on poplar trees; and instead of silver nutmegs and golden pears, it bore brown nuts in prickly cases, which were found to be very good to eat, and were called chestnuts.

Sometimes in the autumn, when the green leaves turn to brilliant gold, and the sun touches them through the early morning mist, *Castanea vesca* shines forth with a dim reflection of her ancient glory. And sometimes on a summer night, when the moon glides across the sky after rain, the glossy, green leaves catch a tender radiance softer than the starry splendour with which they glowed in days gone by. But even without her wondrous leaves and strange fruit and magic song, *Castanea vesca* is always beautiful; and when you see her in the garden with her graceful branches bowing to the green lawn, you can think that through her Lorin became rich enough to marry Maid Mignonette.



THE OVERMAN.

By UPTON SINCLAIR,

Author of "The Jungle."



THIS is the story of Edward Livingston, as he told it to me only a few days before he died; he told it as he lay half paralysed, and knowing that the hand of death was upon him.

I am by profession a scientist. My story goes back some fifty years, when I was a student. I had one brother, Daniel Livingston, five years younger than myself, a musician of extraordinary promise. We lived abroad together for a number of years, each pursuing his own work. About my brother, suffice it to say that music to him was everything—love and friendship, ambition and life. He was a man without a stain, whose lower nature had been burned out by the flame of art. I think the one tie that bound him to the world was myself.

When Daniel Livingston was about twenty-three years of age, his health weakened, and a long sea voyage was decided upon. I could not go with him, so for the first time we parted; and it was twenty years after that before I ever heard of him again.

It was believed that the ship had been wrecked in the South Seas; and I had given him up for dead many years, when it chanced that, as a man advanced in life, I was travelling as a naturalist in Ceylon, and met an old sailor who had been with my brother, and who told me a strange story—how one boat containing five men, including Daniel, had outlived the storm and landed upon an uninhabited island; how, after remaining there for several months, they had made up their minds to risk a voyage in their frail craft; and how my brother alone had refused, declaring his intention to remain by himself, with his violin and the few effects that he had saved.

How this affected me anyone can imagine.

The tale was obviously a true one, and I chanced to have means; and so, getting the best idea I could of the island's location, I purchased a yacht outright and prepared to make a search.

The events immediately following bear only indirectly upon my story, and so I pass over them swiftly. We had been at sea for some three weeks, and were in the locality we sought, and watching day and night for some sign of the island, when late one evening the native captain of the vessel came to my cabin, trembling and pale with fright, to tell me that the crew had mutinied and were about to murder me. I rushed to my chest for my revolvers, only to find that every cartridge was gone; and the other's weapon proved to be in the same plight. In this desperate situation the latter suggested what seemed to be the only possible expedient—that we should make our escape from the vessel in the darkness, and trust to gaining the land. While he crept out to provision and lower a boat, I barricaded the cabin-door and waited; and upon hearing the whistle agreed on, I ran to a port-hole, and seeing the boat, slid into it. An instant later the rope was cut, and I got one glance at the leering countenance of my betrayer, before the ship sped on and all was darkness. I was alone!

The emotions of that night I do not like to recall. Life was still dear to me. It was only when morning came that I lifted my head again and recovered my self-possession.

There was no land in sight—I was tossing upon a waste of water, and already beginning to feel the first cravings of the fearful thirst that I knew must come. But by a strange instinct I still clung to my life; and soon a storm arose, and as the waves began to speed my frail boat along, it rose upon one of them, and I suddenly caught sight of a faint streak of land. I seized the oars and set to work to race for my life. I was not used to the effort, and it took all my strength to keep the craft headed aright, while the sea bore it on to its goal; I fought desperately through the whole day, coming nearer and



"When next I opened my eyes, I lay upon the shore, with a man bending over me."

nearer to my hope, but expecting every instant to be my last, and almost fainting with exhaustion. Finally I came to the very edge of the breakers—and then, in spite of all that I could do, the boat was seized by a wave and whirled round.

I saw before me a long line of bright green forest; and, standing upon the beach in front of me, a single figure—a man—motionless and watching. That moment a breaker smote my little craft, and I was flung into the boiling sea.

I did not know how to swim. I clutched at the boat and missed it, and after that I recall only an instant or two of frantic struggling and choking. When next I opened my eyes, I lay upon the shore, with a man bending over me; and upon my dazed faculties was borne in the startling truth that the man was my brother.

It would have been long before I recognised him but that he was calling me by name. A creature more changed no man could imagine. Gaunt, hollow-eyed, and wild in appearance, he was scarcely the shadow of his former self; he was clad in a rough garment of fur, barefooted and bare-armed, and with long, tangled hair. But

what most struck me—what struck me the instant I opened my eyes, and what never ceased to strike me after that—was the strange, haunted look of his whole countenance; his eyes, swift and restless, shone from beneath the shadow of his brows like those of some forest animal.

For the first few dazed minutes I thought of what I had read of men who had gone mad, or had reverted to the beast, under such circumstances as these. Yet nothing could exceed the tenderness of my brother's voice and manner to me; he bent over me with a gourd full of milk, which he helped me to drink, and he dried my face and brushed back the hair from my forehead, whispering to me as one might to a sick child.

I can remember the very words of our conversation at that strange moment, so keenly did every circumstance impress me. I answered him faintly when he asked me how I did, and he pressed my hand. "You were seeking for me, brother?" he asked.

"I was," I said.

"I sometimes thought that you might," he exclaimed. "Alas! Alas!"

I had been overwhelmed with joy as the truth dawned upon me—the truth that I

had found him. I had forgotten our mutual plight. "Never mind," I whispered. "We may get away somehow; and at least we can be together."

He answered nothing, but helped me lift my head.

"How came you alone in that boat?" he asked.

"It is a long story," I replied, shuddering as I gazed at the waves that were thundering on the beach before us. "I will tell it later."

"You have been long upon the water?"

"Only since last night," I said; and then gazing about me suddenly, I cried: "And you—you have been here all these years!"

"All these years," he answered.

"And alone?"

"Alone."

I trembled as I gazed into his face; his eyes seemed fairly to burn.

"How have you borne it?" I cried. "What have you done?"

His answer made me start. "I have done very well," he said; "I have not been unhappy."

The words seemed strange to me—but his voice was stranger yet. Surely there were signs enough of unhappiness upon his face!

He seemed to read my thoughts. "Do not worry," he went on, pressing his hand in mine; "I will tell you all about it later."

But my mind could not be turned away so easily. When I felt stronger and sat up, I came back to the question, gazing at his haggard face and the strange costume he wore.

"You can make no better clothing?" I cried; "and for food—what do you do?"

"I have all the food that I can eat," was the response, "and everything else that I need. You shall see."

"But have you seen *no* one?" I persisted—"no ships, in all this time?"

"I have not wished to see any," he said; and then he smiled gently as he saw my stare of amazement. "I have not wished for anything," he said gently; "I have a home, as you shall see, and I have never needed company. Have you forgotten how it used to be, dear brother?"

It took me a long time to understand his words. I was still gazing at him helplessly. "And you mean," I cried—"you mean that you still—you still live in your music?"

"Yes," he said, "I mean that."

I was sitting upright and gripping his arm tightly. "And for twenty years!" I gasped.

"Twenty thousand years would be all too little for music," was the reply.

I sank back, and he wrapped his arms about me. "Dear brother," he said, smiling, "let us not go into that just now. Wait until to-morrow, at the least. Perhaps I can help you now, and we can walk."

We had not far to go, and with his help I managed the task. Back from the shore rose a high cliff, and a cavern in this was evidently his home. At one side there was a pen, in which were three or four captive goats; and upon the grassy lawn in front was a rough seat. With the exception of a fireplace, and a path he had cut through the thicket, there were no other signs that the place was inhabited.

I sank down upon the grass, and he brought me fresh water and fruits, and cooked rice, which I ate hungrily. Then, when I was stronger, I got up and began to examine his home.

The cave was the size of a large room; it was dry, but bare of all furniture except a table and a roughly made chair and bed. My brother's possessions consisted mainly of a few objects (notably some tools) which he and the sailors had been able to recover from the wreck of the ship. There were a few skins which served him as bags in which to keep his provisions; his bowls and dishes were gourds and the shells of turtles. He was without artificial light, and he had only a few quires of writing-paper from the ship-captain's portfolio. For the rest, a violin without strings, and a bow without hairs, made up a list of the possessions so far as I could make them out. And it was upon the strength of these that he had said to me: "I have everything that I need!"

With rest and food my strength returned, and before long my mind was altogether occupied with my brother.

First of all, of course, my thought was of his home—of his surroundings and his ways. I rummaged about his cavern, wondering at his makeshifts—or, rather, at his lack of them.

"You have no lamp?" I cried. "But, Daniel, the wax-plant grows in this climate. Or you might use tallow or oil."

"Dear brother," he answered, "you forget that I have no books to read. And the few things that need light—cannot I just as well do them by day?"

"But, then, the long nights—you sleep?"

"No," said he gently, "I do not sleep"; and then, with his strange smile, he added: "I live."

"You live!" I echoed in perplexity; and then I stopped, catching the quiet, steady gaze of his eyes.

"Just so," he said, "I live. I had never lived before."

Most of all, I think, I was perplexed at the sight of his violin. From what I had seen of his youthful life, I could have imagined him spending all day and all night with that; but here it hung, useless as a stick of wood.

"You could have made strings for it," I said. "I can make them for you."

"But they would be of no use to me," he answered.

"And all your music—you have given it up?"

"The music I have to do with," he said, "has long ceased to be music that anyone could play."

"But, Daniel!" I protested.

"Listen to me," he said. "Have you never read that Beethoven never heard some of his greatest symphonies? Do you not understand how a musician can comprehend music from a score? And from that, how he can create it in his own mind and enjoy it, without ever writing it down or hearing it?"

"Then," I said, almost speechless with wonder; "then you compose music in your mind?"

"No," he said. "I *live* music in my soul."

These things were on the day after my rescue, after I had recovered from my exhaustion. The words which he spoke I no more comprehended than if I had been a child; but the strangeness of the thing haunted my soul, and my questioning and arguing never ceased. All of this he bore with a gentle patience.

I had my youthful recollections of Robinson Crusoe; and as a man of science, I could naturally not spend two minutes conversing with Daniel and examining his affairs without thinking some new device by which he could have made his lot more tolerable. I could as yet hardly realise that it was to be my own fate to live upon the deserted island for ever; all my thoughts were of what I should have done had I been in his place. He had no weapons, no traps, no gardens, no house—and so on. "But, Edward," he would say again and again, "do you not understand? Once more—I have no time for such things."

"Time! *Time!*" I would cry. "But what *else* have you? What have you to *do*?"

"I have my life to live," was the in-

variable response; "I have no time for anything else."

We were sitting that afternoon beneath the shade of a great forest-tree before the cavern. Suddenly, seeing again the dazed look upon my face, he put his arm about me.

"Listen to me, dear brother," he said, smiling. "You remember Diogenes, who lived in a tub? That was in order that he might have to call no man master, and no thing—least of all his own body. And can you not see that a man's own soul is his soul just the same, whether he be on a desert island or in the midst of a city of millions? And that mind, emotion, will—he has the life of his soul to live?"

I sat surprised into silence; then suddenly I felt Daniel's arm tighten about me. "Ah, my dear brother," he said, his voice lowering, "it will be so hard! Do you think I have not realised it—how hard, *hard* it will be?"

"What will be hard?" I asked.

"Your life—everything you have to face," he answered. "How can you not see it—do you not see that *you* have to live upon this island, too?"

"I have not thought of it much," I said. "I have been thinking of you."

"I know it," he replied; "but I do not see how you are to bear it. I saw it all while I watched you sweep in with the boat—I saw all the pain and all the sorrow, and it was long before I made up my mind that it was not best to let you die."

I started, but he held me tight.

"Yes," he said, "and I fear that I chose wrongly. Is it not strange that a man who has seen what I have seen should still be bound by such chains—that what I knew would be best, I could not do, simply because you were my brother?"

He must have felt my heart beating faster. "Listen to me," he went on quickly, but still with his frightful quietness. "Listen to me while I try to tell you—what I can hardly bear to tell you. All the tragedy of being is summed up in such a situation as this of ours; I am as helpless before it as you are—both of us are as helpless as children."

I gazed at him again, and suddenly he caught me with the wild look of his eyes. He had no need to hold me with his hand.

"Brother," he said, "you must think this out for yourself, as you can: I cannot explain it to you—cannot explain anything about it. Suffice it to say that for twenty years I have lived here, and that I have fought a fight which no man has ever fought before, and

seen what I believe no man has ever seen. Knowing you as I do, I know that you can by no possibility ever follow me. It is as if I had found the fourth dimension of space ; it is as if I dwelt in a house through



"To my horror, he gave no signs. Even then I clung to him, I shook him."

the walls of which you walked without seeing them. How you are to bear your life here, my dear, dear brother, I do not know ; but the truth is merciless, and you must face it—you will have to live on this island all your days, I am sure ; and you will have to live here *alone* !"

A sudden shudder passed through me.

"Daniel !" I gasped ; it seemed to me that his eyes were on fire. "You mean, I suppose, that you are going away to some other part of the place—to another island ?"

"Whether I go to another place or not, what matters that ? No, I shall not, I think ; and rest assured that, whatever I do, I love you, my heart yearns for you, and all my tenderness and love are yours ; but also that though you were with me, and held me in your arms four-and-twenty hours a day—yet all the time you would be alone."

I could find no word to say—I could scarcely think.

"The pain of it," he went on, still quietly, still tenderly, "is that I cannot explain it to anyone, that I cannot explain it to myself ; that there are no words for it, nothing but the thing. The only explanation I can give is that I am become a madman, and that you must accept the fact. For the thing I do I can no more help doing than I could help the beating of my heart. All the world of love that I might bear to you, or to any other human soul, could no more enable me to stop than it would enable the grass to stop growing. Again you must accept the fact—you must learn to think of me as a man who is in the grasp of a fiend."

There was a pause. Not once had I taken my eyes from my brother's, and I sat with my heart throbbing wildly ; the strangeness of the whole thing was too much for me—at times I was certain that I was indeed listening to a maniac.

When my brother began speaking again, I was at first hardly conscious of it. "Edward," he said, "I have thought about this—that per-

haps my presence would be painful to you. If so, let me go away. Take what tools I have here, and make this place your home—you have knowledge at your command, you can plant and hunt and study, and do what you will. As for me, such things make no difference ; I could soon make myself comfortable again, and perhaps——"

"Say no more about it," I interrupted quickly; "if anyone must go, let it be me, for I shall have need of occupation."

For long hours after that strange experience I was pacing up and down the storm-swept beach of the island. What I had heard had disturbed me more than anything before in my life; the whole surroundings contributed to the effect—the perils I had passed through, the terrible future which stretched before me, the loss of my brother, and the finding of this strange madman in his place. But I was by nature a practical person, scientific and precise in my mode of thought; I did my best to convince myself that solitude and suffering had unhinged my brother's mind. There is no use telling a scientist that he cannot understand a certain matter, and expecting him to let it rest; my mind was soon made up that I would study this malady, and perhaps cure it. My interest in the strange problem did more than anything else to keep me from realising to the full extent the discomfort I must needs face in the future.

When hunger brought my thoughts back to myself, I returned to the cave, where I found my brother pacing backward and forward upon a path which he had worn deep in the ground in front of his home; his head was sunk forward, his eyes on the ground, and he was evidently lost in deep thought. I spoke to him once, but he did not hear me; I walked by him and entered the cavern.

I now set to work to make a thorough examination of his belongings, musing that perhaps the best way to get to the bottom of his strange trouble would be to provide him with some of the ordinary amenities of life. I found that the tools were not too rusty to be of service, and being a person with a talent for doing things, I was soon interested in planning how I could make a habitable place out of the cave. In the latitude I knew that a door and a fireplace would never be an absolute necessity; but I pleased myself thinking that they might not be useless when the storms blew in. Also, being blessed with much knowledge of the natural world, I flattered myself that before many days would have passed I should have added considerably to the comforts of the house.

I gave the balance of the day to a preliminary ransacking of the island. A scientist has an inexhaustible mine of interest in such an environment, and in the plans which I formed for work I forgot everything else for the time.

And so towards sundown I returned to the cabin. My brother was still pacing to

and fro, exactly as I had left him. Taught by previous experience, I entered the cabin without addressing him, and set about preparing a meal. I had not gone very far before I heard his step behind me.

"Edward," he said.

"What is it?" I asked, turning.

"I wished merely to tell you—that you will not see me for a day or two. I wish you not to worry about me."

I gazed at him in perplexity that was too great to permit of my framing a question. His haggard glance met mine again, and again he put his hand upon my shoulder with a gesture of affection; then he turned and went slowly away.

The incident diminished my appetite, for I had expected to interest him in my banquet. I sat for hours afterwards, gazing out of the cavern entrance at the moonlighted grove, silent and desolate beyond any telling. I think I never felt more alone than just then.

The problem was my only company; I had no idea where Daniel had gone; but after a feverish sleep I was up again at dawn, my mind fully made up for a search. I fear I drag out my story—it was nearly sundown when at last my efforts were rewarded. I was returning home in despair and misery, when, suddenly, in the back of the same cliffs in which was our home, I saw another opening, and with a gleam of hope I hurried towards it and peered in. It was too dark to see, but I entered and stepped to one side in the darkness; and then, as my eyes adjusted themselves to the gloom, I saw my brother.

I was unperceived, and I went forward until I could see him plainly. He sat upon a block of stone, the edge of which his hands gripped tensely; with his face slightly raised, he was staring before him into space. I would describe, if I could, the impression which his whole appearance gave me; it was of a man undergoing some fearful strain. The knotted muscles stood out upon his arms; his nostrils were distended, his breath coming fast, and I could see the veins throbbing in his forehead. I stood for I know not how long, with my heart beating madly, a strange, indescribable *fear* in possession of me. Divining the truth instinctively, I moved in front of him and gazed into his eyes; he neither saw me nor heard me, nor gave any sign that he was conscious of my presence. Then suddenly, unable to bear the strain any longer, I clutched him in my arms, crying wildly: "Daniel! Daniel!"

To my horror, he gave no signs. Even then I clung to him, I shook him; I could feel the quivering of his tense arms. At last, completely overcome, I turned and staggered from the place.

All that night I lay stretched out upon the bed, sleepless. I had studied medicine, but nothing that I had ever heard of bore any resemblance to this. Perhaps two hours after sunrise, as I was sitting with my eyes fixed in the direction of the other cavern, all at once I saw my brother appear.

I sprang up in sheer fright; he was pale beyond imagination. He paid no attention to me, but went past me and entered the cave. He groped his way to his larder and, sinking down upon the ground, took some of the food and ate it slowly. There was a bowl of milk which I had put there, and which he drank. Then he lay down, resting his head upon his arm, and fell fast asleep.

I followed him in silence when he rose, his weakness apparently gone. He went to the spring which was near the cavern, and bathed his face and arms in the stream below it. After that he came towards me and, sitting down beside me, put his arm around me.

"Dear brother," he said, "it was very good of you; but please do not do what you did again."

"You knew that I was there?" I cried.

"Yes," he said, "I knew it."

"And why did you not answer me?"

"I could not answer you, brother." And then with a sudden gesture he checked me. "I could not even tell you *why*," he said. "It must suffice you, Edward, to know that this must be, and that you cannot help it."

"But it will kill me!" I cried.

"Perhaps," he said very quietly, "or perhaps it will kill me first. I cannot tell."

We stood for some minutes without speaking. "Daniel," I ventured at last, "I had hoped that in the external ways I might assist you—your food, perhaps—"

"I could not let you serve me," he answered; "I have no way to serve you in return. And, besides that, I have learned to do cheerfully what little physical toil I must. The island is covered with food, you know."

"But if you should be sick?" I cried.

"If I should be sick," he said, "I should either get well again, or else die."

"Then you do not feel pain?"

"To learn to bear pain has been one of my tasks," was the response. "I should think," he continued, changing the subject abruptly, "that if you had studied all your

life as you did when we lived together, by this time you would not fear solitude—that you would find in this new world enough to fill all your time."

"I might—perhaps I shall," I said; "but, Daniel, you have been here twenty years, and never seen a ship! So how could I know that the result of any studies of mine would ever be made known to the world? I have not even any paper to write upon."

The other sat gazing ahead of him at the moonlit water through the trees; I saw the strange smile upon his lips again.

"All that sorrow," he said—"I fought with it once myself, and how I wish that I could help you to fight with it! For a year or so I also waited for a ship, and wrote down the best of my music, and poured out the tears of my soul. But, Edward, I no longer write my music, and I no longer fear lest my work be not made known to the world."

His voice had sunk low. Over the tree-tops a silver moon was gleaming, and his eyes were fixed upon it. "On that huge ball of iron and rock," said he, "there was once power and life and beauty; and now it rolls there through the years and the ages, cold and dead and still. And some day this planet, too, will roll through the years and the ages; and no eye will behold it, and no mind will be aware of it; and the voices of men will be hushed upon it, and the monuments of men will be dust upon it; and, Edward, what then of my music, what then of your science and your books?"

I answered nothing.

"Perhaps in all the ages that have gone over this island," he continued, "no human foot ever trod upon it before."

And so my brother passed on, pressing his hand upon my shoulder; and through the watches of the night I saw him pacing backward and forward, backward and forward, upon the long, white stretch of sand.

A month must have passed after that—I took little heed of the time. I toiled at the cave, I played hunter and naturalist. I was busy with my hands, but very seldom was I happy or at peace. For day after day that silent figure roamed here and there before my eyes, and hour after hour those strange, silent vigils to the black cavern continued. I grew more and more restless and oppressed, until at last, one night, at the end of a long and exhausting vigil, my impatience reached its climax.

I remember how I sat by his side and caught his hand, like a supplicating child.

"Daniel," I asked, "has it never occurred to you that you are unkind to me?"

"Unkind?" he asked gently.

"Unkind," I said. "I have waited—how long have I waited! It seemed to me that it could not last for ever—that you would not continue to treat me always as if I were a child."

"Edward," he said, "I know what you are going to say. I wish that you would spare me."

"I cannot spare you!" I cried with sudden vehemence. "I tell you I cannot bear it—I tell you I shall go mad! This loneliness and this haunting perplexity—I swear to you that I cannot endure it any longer!"

My brother sat gazing before him. After a moment I went on, more quietly, pleading with him. "Daniel," I said, "you cannot ever persuade me that you must needs treat me as you have treated me since I came to this place. I came here to seek for you—for that purpose alone—and with love in my heart. And you keep me from you, you treat me as if I were not a human being!"

"Stop, Edward!" cried my brother imploringly; "do not say such things as that! Ah! what can I tell you? How can I say it to you?—it is not enough that you should be a human being."

"Not enough!" I echoed.

"Ah! do you suppose—can you suppose—that if this thing of which we speak were mine to give—if by losing it myself I could give it to you—can you suppose I would not do it, and do it with joy? All that love could make possible I would do—how much I would do I cannot tell you. But this that you ask of me—this I *cannot* do!"

"You mean"—I clung to the argument with my scientific instinct—"you mean that there is in your own life, in your own mind, certain things which could be conveyed to another's?"

"I do," he said.

"But the use of words——" I began.

"No words could have any relation to this," he said.

"But ideas, Daniel!" I protested. "There may be ideas in the mind for which we can find no words, but surely we can approximate them, we can foreshadow them."

"There are some things in my mind that are not ideas," was his quick reply.

"I do not understand that," I exclaimed.

"I know it," said my brother; "that is the point."

"But," I cried in vexation, "but what could such things be? How can one think——"

"In that high hour thought was not," my brother quoted.

I sat silent, and a long pause followed. Then I began once more: "Let me ask you, Daniel; perhaps you do not understand how difficult it is for one mind to believe that it cannot grasp what is in another mind. But this—this knowledge to which you have come—you must surely have come to it by degrees, by a process?"

"Yes," said he.

"And of that—surely you could explain to me at least the beginning, which might help me to divine in what the difference consists?"

He answered nothing for a moment; I went on quickly: "Ah, I fear that there must be another reason that you do not realise. Might it not be true that you would find it easier to explain to another than to me? Is it not at all that you shrink from my ways of thinking? Is it not that you know that I have never understood your art?"

"Tell me," he asked suddenly, "what have you thought about me since you have been here?"

"What difference does it make what I think?" I cried. "What data have I for thinking anything? I know that I am in the presence of something which haunts me; and also that I have never been more wretched in my life."

"Ah, Daniel!" I cried, "be fair with me—you have not been fair! Why should you shrink from me as if I were a base person? What harm could it do, even if I did not understand you? I cannot help it—the effect of this thing upon me; I am a grown man, and yet you have turned me into a child again! If you were to tell me about ghosts, I think I should take it for the truth."

"Ah!" said my brother.

"Yes, even that!" I cried. "But you think I am not worthy even to guess at your life and your knowledge—no, do not try to stop me, I know that this is the fact! If it were not so, you would trust to love—you would not cast me away from you, you would do what you could!"

"Be still! Be still!" he whispered. "Do not speak to me that way—I will do what I can—I will tell you what I am able."

For a long time he sat with knit brows. Then at last he began his story.

"I go back," he said, "to the time when I first landed on this island. The ship was wrecked upon the bar just ahead of us; and later, when the sea fell, we set to work to



“‘I had stepped out upon the summit, and stood transfixed with the glory of an endless vision of dawn.’”

save from it as much as we could. The voyage had restored my health, and I had my violin ; and when I ascertained that the place sheltered no wild beasts or men, I was myself well content to remain as long as

might be necessary. I had no doubt that some ship would appear in the end ; and meanwhile there was nothing to trouble me, except the enforced companionship of men who did not understand me. In the end, I

escaped from that trouble with the plea that if I took up my residence at the other side of the island, I could better watch the sea; and so I built a tiny hut, and was, I think, as happy as I had ever been before.

"But as the months passed by and no vessel appeared, the situation changed. I perceived that sooner or later my violin would be useless; and about the same time the sailors came to me to say that they had decided to rig a boat with a sail, and endeavour to reach some inhabited island. It was the time of quiet seas, and they preferred to run the risk to remaining longer in isolation.

"I was then called upon to make the great decision. Should I chance my life with the rest, or should I trust to the certainty that some day a vessel would appear, and meanwhile devote myself to the work which loomed before me—the living of my life, the seeking of the power which I felt to be hidden in me, without any external assistance or reference whatever? Perhaps, had I seen the twenty years before me, I should have shrunk from the task; but, as it was, I chose what was to be the bolder, to my companions the more timid course.

"After that, of course, there could be no halfway measures. I had to make good my purpose; I had to face either absolute victory or absolute defeat. As I had expected, my violin soon became useless, and, no ship appearing, I perceived in the end that I had to give up that thought, too.

"I have already hinted the grounds of my argument to you. It is my belief that life is its own end, and needs no justification. It is also my belief that each individual soul is a microcosm self-sufficient, and its own excuse for being. Each day as I wrought, I came to be more and more possessed with that truth, it came to be more and more self-evident and final; until at last there came a day when I would not have hailed a ship had I seen one—when the life that loomed up before me within my own heart was a thing of so much interest that the rest of the world was nothing in comparison.

"At first I had felt just as you feel now—I had been interested in food and clothing and light, and what not else; but in the end I found myself behaving as a soldier upon a long campaign—I strewed my path with the things that had once been necessities, and that now were encumbrances. It proved thus with my violin—strings or no strings; the music that throbbed in my soul and swept me away into the far spaces of my being—it was no longer to be limited and

restrained by what human fingers could achieve. It was as if I had once plodded upon the land and now discovered wings. When the vision came to me, I no longer toiled for weeks to shape it and record it—I went on where the new light shone, where the new hope beckoned; and so, day after day, towards things with which it is not easy for words to deal."

My brother paused for a while; I did not speak.

"When I try to talk with you of these things," he said at last, "I do not know where I stand. I find myself thinking of the brother I remember—who was content to call himself a materialist. You ask me what was this life that I speak of—was it thought, was it motion, was it will? It was all, I think; always it involved contemplation, the beholding of a universe of being, and the comprehending of it as an utterance of power; and always it was emotion, the flooding of one's being with an oceanic tide of joy and exultation; and always it was will—it was the concentration of all the powers of one's soul in one colossal effort. But chiefest of all, I think—and what is hardest even to hint at—it was the fourth, and the highest of the faculties of the mind—it was imagination.

"It is endless—that is the first thing that a man learns about it—it is the very presence of the infinite. And also he learns that it is at his command—that it is no accident, but his being itself; that he has but to call, and it comes; that he has but to knock, and it is opened unto him. It is that for which pilgrims and crusaders have fought, which prophets and saints have sung. And it is that, of course, which is the life of music. Music lies nearest to this mystery; to him who understands, it is the living presence of the spirit. Its movement is the building up of that ecstasy, its complexity is the infiniteness of that vision—all the fulness and the wonder and the glory of it are there."

I give but my recollection of my brother's words. He paused again and sat gazing before him. "I do not know," he said, "how much these metaphors convey to you. A long time had passed—some eight years, I imagine, though I kept no count of the time. I was coming bit by bit to a new and strange experience—one which is not of this life, and one which would seem to you, I imagine, as altogether supernatural.

"So," said Daniel, "you must believe me as you can. I have spoken of strange bursts of vision, sudden gleams of insight which shake one's being to its depth. Such ex-

periences are not unusual—poets have sung of them; but now there came to be something which, strange as it may sound, seemed to be not of a kind with my own soul—something which affected me with an indescribable *fear*. I fought against the thought, for I had no belief in the unseen. I strive to put into words something that cannot be put into words—but I was like a man groping in utter darkness, and touching something *alive*. I had fought my way into this unknown land, and everywhere I had gone, so far, the things that I achieved were of my own power, the impulses were those of my own will. But now, day by day, I was haunted by the unthinkable suspicion that into my life was coming something that was not myself. I was a bird mounting upon the air—and the air had a will of its own! It was something that repelled me—something that drew me. I wrestled with the thought day and night, comparing it with anything of which I had ever heard or known. But in vain—it was new to me.

"These things of which I speak you must understand as happening in the midst of a tempest of emotions; I sat in a state which there is no imagining—I ate nothing for days, I sat for days without moving, until at last there came the climax, a desperate resolve, a mounting up, a battling with unseen forces, a knocking upon unseen doors—and then a sudden rending away of barriers, and the inpouring of a sea of life. I can only use metaphors. I was a traveller, and I had toiled towards the sunrise, climbing peak upon peak, and suddenly I had stepped out upon the summit, and stood transfixed with the glory of an endless vision of dawn."

My brother's voice had sunk to a whisper, and his hand lay upon my arm. I cannot tell how his words had affected me.

"And this—this thing——" I ventured. "It is real?"

"It is real," he said; "there is nothing else so real."

"And it—it is a heaven?"

"No," he said, "it is another earth."

I started.

"As a scientist," he said—"what do you believe about the universe? Is there life throughout it?"

"I do not know, it is a possibility."

"Yes," said Daniel; "but for me it is a certainty. It is a fact in which I live, day after day."

I had caught him by the arm.

"Daniel!" I cried.

"It is just so," he said.

"Another planet?"

"I do not know," was the answer. "Another race of beings, is all that I can tell you."

"And are they human beings?"

"They have passed entirely beyond anything which those words can mean to me."

"And you know them?"

"Yes."

"And personally?"

"More than personally."

"How do you mean?"

"I know them directly I live in their lives. I know them as I know the symphony I hear—as one drop of water knows the sea."

I was dazed; I could hardly think. "And their name?" I asked.

"They have no name," said my brother, "they have no words. They have passed the need of language—they communicate with each other by immediate spiritual union. Their life is upon a higher plane than ours; they do not deal in ideas, but in imaginative intuitions."

"And then, Daniel, when you—when you pass into that trance—it is that!"

"It is that," said he. "By an effort of my will I lift myself into their consciousness; but because my physical and mental faculties have not been prepared by long ages of development, my time with them is limited, and I fall back to recruit my strength."

"And this has been going on for years?"

"For ten or twelve years," was his reply.

It will, perhaps, be best for me to give the substance of what he told me in the long conversation which ensued. "I do not know where these people are," he told me. "I only know that throughout universal space they are the race which is nearest in its development to our own. I do not know what they look like. I have never seen nor heard them. I only live their lives. I do not ask them any questions; our relation is nothing of that sort. It is as if they were playing music which I heard; but also as if their music was their whole life, so that I know all they have and do. Their presence comes to me as the inwelling of universal joy; of love and worship and rapture, unending and unthinkable. Their life is infinite variety—immediate and perpetual expansion—spiritual insight developing in a ratio determined by the will of the individuals. It is as if a man were to witness the springtime arising of Nature, but taking place in an hour instead of three months; and he comprehending it, not from the out-

side, but living it, as a bursting forth of song."

"And to this song there is no limit?" I asked him.

"When you speak of the soul as being infinite," said Daniel, "you do not mean that it extends merely beyond your thoughts, but you mean that you may heap quantity upon quantity, and multiply quantity by quantity, in any ratio and at any speed you please, and still have infinity before you."

"You mean that these beings understand what is going on in each other's mind?"

"They understand all minds as you understand your own. It is of the nature of spiritual passion to mingle at a certain stage of intensity, like electricity in the lightning flash. This race has developed a new sense, just as man has developed senses which are not possessed by lower animals."

"And these people were once men?"

"Presumably."

"And then they have escaped altogether from the sorrows of life?"

"Say, rather," he answered, "that they have escaped to the sorrows of life. The essence of life is sorrow."

"It does not seem so, from your picture," I said.

"That is simple, because my picture is not understood. Every one of these beings of whom I speak bears in his bosom a pain for which there are no words; every one of them—there are countless numbers of them, living each in my consciousness as the voice of one instrument lives in a symphony—each one is a Titan spirit, wrestling day and night without end, without possibility of respite, and bearing on his shoulders a universal load of woe. In no way could you imagine one better than as a soldier in the crisis of the battle, panting, and blind with pain, dying amid the glory of his achievement."

"And such a life!" I cried. "Why do they live it?"

"They live it because it demands with the voice of all their being to be lived; because the presence of it is rapture and unutterable holiness; because it will allow no questions, because it is instant, imperative, and final—it *will be lived!*"

I sat in silence. "Do I gather from your words," I asked, "that immortality is not one of the privileges of this race?"

He smiled again. "The spiritual life," he said, "does not begin until the thought of immortality is flung away. A man's duty looms up before him—and in his weakness he will not do it, but puts the fruition of

his life into another world, where the terms are not so hard!"

"This people," I asked—"what do they know about God?"

"They know no more than men do," was the answer, "except that they know they know nothing. They know that the veil is not lifted. It is not that for which they seek—life is their task, and life only; to behold its endless fruition; to dwell in the beauty of it, to wield power of it; to toil at its whirling loom, to build up palaces of music from it. Ah, my brother, why have you never lived a symphony?"

"These people have no physical life?" I asked.

"Assuredly they have," was his answer, "but it is a life which does not enter their consciousness—any more than, for instance, the beating of your heart and the renewing of your tissues. They have attained to mastery over the world of matter. They temper the seasons to their wish; disease and ill-health they have banished entirely; and, understanding the ways of Nature, they create their food at will."

"And their society knows no rich and no poor? Their government?"

"They have no government," he said; "their law is their inspiration."

Until far into the night we sat talking; and then, early in the morning, as I went out upon the beach—I saw a ship standing in towards the shore! I recall, as if it were yesterday, how my heart leaped up, and with what an agony of uncertainty I stood waving a signal.

And then I rushed to see my brother, shouting the news aloud. Startled with his own thoughts, he gazed at me in perplexity.

"A ship has come!" I cried. "A ship!"

"A ship!" he echoed; and then, with a sudden light: "Oh, I see!"

"Come!" I cried. "They will take us aboard!"

But my brother shook his head. "No, Edward," he replied, "I cannot do that."

I started. "No," he said again, "do not ask me. You go—but let me stay here until the end!"

"What can you mean?" I cried. "Can you really suppose that I would leave you?"

"I am not fitted to travel," he said—"I do not wish to change. And I could not face the thing which you call civilisation. It has no interest for me."

"But we can live in the country," I cried. "I have money—nothing need trouble you!" But all my arguments made no impression



"I rushed to see my brother, shouting the news aloud."

upon him ; he would only repeat that he desired to be left alone. I tried to move him by saying that I would not leave him. I might stay if I chose, he said—he could not help that ; but if I were wise, I would leave him to his own life ; and I would not subject him to the pain of meeting the strangers upon the ship. They would not understand, and they would only cause him vexation. And even while I was protesting with him,

we heard the shouts of men upon the shore. He rose up and laid his hand upon my shoulders, and kissed me upon the forehead, saying : "Be wise—or let me be wise for you. Respect my judgment and let me go."

And so he turned and started away towards the centre of the island. At the edge of the thicket he turned and waved his hand to me. I never saw him again.

THE GHOST.

By OLIVER ONIONS.



EARLY in the November afternoon Williams the gardener had gathered together all the wet leaves and brushwood, all the tangle of dead runners and creepers that for weeks had littered the kitchen-garden, and all the house-

hold rubbish that the maids wanted to be rid of, and had made a great fire beyond the end of the toolhouse. He had started it by driving three short sticks into the ground so that they leaned together like the tripod on which the gipsies who had once encamped on the Common had boiled their kettle; and when the little flame had begun to twist and lick, and the twigs to crackle inside it, Johnnie Williams (the gardener's son) and Eddy had helped to stack all the broken pea-sticks and the drier branches about it like an Indian wigwam. Soon the fire had begun to draw with a hollow sound; Williams had set a few bricks and a sodden old log on the side away from the wind, to make a rough hearth; and from the great stack of fuel he had brought straggling pitchfork-loads, pressing all close with his heavy boot. Johnnie Williams, who was tremendously strong—or, at least, Eddy thought so, because he wore thick boots and corduroys like his father—trimmed the fire with a thick rose-stake; and Eddy pottered about till he found a nice light pea-stick, and poked and stirred at the jolly fire here and there, and thrust back unconsumed ends, and made openings into its fierce red heart, and danced with delight as the flames caught the straw and husks of the runners, and wept with the strong smoke in his eyes, till the end of his pea-stick caught and burned, and he marched about with it all red and glowing. Then the fire grew too hot to approach, except on the side from which the wind blew.

The smell of the wet wood brought John

over from the plantation; and "Hurrah! Roast potatoes!" John cried, and ran off to the kitchen to get some. They crouched down, turning their faces away, and set the potatoes in the grey ash that the wind fanned every moment into beautiful bright salmons and pinks and roses; and their eyes ran and smarted with the pungent smoke. In five minutes they had the potatoes out, to see if they were cooked. They were all raw, and burnt their mouths; and when they had set them back again, Eddy gazed into the fire.

"There's a big book upstairs 't they burn people in fires," he said by and by, "'n a man put his hand in first, 'cos it had written . . . something . . . 'n he was all burnt up. He *was*, John; 'n it was at . . . some place. . . . George said so."

"Pooh! Let's be firemen. We'll be firemen, an' then the potatoes will be done, better than silly boiled ones. Come on!"

The gardener's boy grinned. "We haven't made this fire for you boys to play," he said swaggeringly; "we're working"; and at that moment Williams came up with his pitchfork and flung on a load of soaked stuff, that hissed and spluttered and gave out a dense volume of white smoke. He flung on another and another. "Aha, we're working!" said Johnnie Williams; and Eddy looked disconsolately at the beautiful fire, all spoiled. The gardener began to bank it up with earth; and the white smoke rose in clouds against the grey sky, and hid the copse and the trees of the paddock, and rolled away over the pond and the plantation, leaving wisps trailing behind it in the grass, like combed wool.

"You needn't think *you're* doing a lot of work, anyway, Johnnie Williams," John growled. And Johnnie grinned again, while Eddy watched the smoke that the cold surface of the water flattened out over the pond.

"'F we'd had lots, like that, for the battle, it would have been like a fog," he said wistfully.

"He's banked the potatoes up, too," John grumbled. "You are rotten, Johnnie Williams—I say, Eddy!"

"What, John?"



"From the great stack of fuel he had brought straggling pitchfork-loads."

"I know! They're earthing turnips down the road. Let's get some turnips, an' we'll eat them, an' then we'll make a ghost."

Eddy looked at him for a moment and then said timidly: "What's a ghost, John?"

"Doesn't know what a ghost is! Come on—I'll show you!"

Down the road, across a dip of the land, the red sun showed like a blood-orange; it turned the back of the horse in the field to a rich russet, and outlined the cart and glowed on the clayey garments of the men. One man was just tilting the cart and starting

the horse, and the great turnips came rumbling and bounding out, some rolling yards away. A great earth-bank, higher than the boys and a dozen yards long, ran alongside the ploughed-up clods; and the straw with which the turnips were covered was gathered at intervals into little wisps that stuck up out of the bank like chimneys.

"What are they for, John?" Eddy asked, as the man righted the cart again with a jolt.

"So's the air can get in, of course. Pick a big one." He rolled the turnips



"Eddy watched the smoke that the cold surface of the water flattened out over the pond."

about and selected one nearly as big as his head, all tinged with green down one side. Then he got out his penknife.

Eddy was earnestly considering what a ghost was, and what made the name so odd; and then he remembered where he had heard it before. It had been on Sundays, in the church; and he had had a vague, comfortable idea of something large and mild, gracious and beaming and golden. John was hacking round his turnip with his penknife; the cut showed a pale gold yellow in the sun; so no doubt it was the stuff ghosts were made of. But still Eddy was a little doubtful, and by and by he ventured to say: "Aren't they bigger'n that, John?"

"What?" said John, digging his fingers into the cut and breaking off a woody slice.

"Ghosts. Aren't they ever so big?"

"Rather, some of 'em," John replied. "Here you are. We'll eat this one and get another."

"Yes, John. 'N what do they do—ghosts?"

"Do?—Ah! You'll see!—Scare people to death, they do, an' haunt 'em, an' all sorts of things. An' they live in churchyards an' places at midnight; an' Ellen says she once saw one that went 'Moo-o-o!'—like that—an' it had a white sheet on——"

"Had it?" said Eddy, awestruck. . . "N what did Ellen do when it said . . . that . . .?"

"Why, she nearly died, of course; she was horribly frightened, an' so'd you have been."

"No, I wouldn't," said Eddy tremulously.

"Oh, of course *you* wouldn't!" John replied. "I say—you can get a candle, can't you?"

"What for?"

"Why, to make the ghost; their eyes shine dreadfully, an' you have to have a candle."

"Yes," said Eddy; and then his own eyes shone, and he clapped his chubby hands. "'N, John! we'll put it behind the

hedge, by the little gate, 'n frighten Williams 'n Johnnie because they spoiled our fire, won't we?"

"Yes; come on!"

As they walked they ate the wedges that John half cut, half broke from the spare turnip. John grumbled because the turnip was cold and Williams had banked up the hot potatoes. The elms at the roadside were grey and bare, and the scanty brown leaves of the oaks rustled and shivered. As they approached home, they saw the opaque white smoke of the fire again, rolling like endless white curls; and they took the turnip to the toolhouse.

John sent Eddy into the kitchen for a large table-knife, and a spoon to scrape with. He cut a hole in the top of the turnip big enough to admit the bowl of the spoon, but it was terribly hard work to scoop it out inside. It was a large and very hard turnip, and John's wrist ached with working it; and soon he broke off, to try to sharpen the edge of the spoon on the oilstone, as George had done the gouges. "I know!" he said suddenly; "we'll cut it in two, an' scrape out half each, an' then tie it together again with string." He gave Eddy the spoon and took one of Williams's trowels, and that way they got on much more quickly. They ate the woody chips and scallops till they were no longer hungry for turnip, and John said the pigs could have the rest. He sent Eddy off for the candle-end, and he wasn't to say what it was for.

"Ellen nearly died, didn't she, John?" Eddy said solemnly, nodding once or twice as John turned the halves of the turnip this way and that against the toolhouse window.

"She'd have died in another minute; it was awful," John replied.

"'N did the candle inside make its eyes all horrible?"

"There's all sorts of ghosts; I don't know whether it was that sort."

"Will ours be the sort that says 'Moo-o-o'?"

"Of course it won't; *we* shall have to scrouch down in the hedge an' say that when they come."

"Ooo-o-o!" said Eddy. "I hope Williams nearly dies, John; 't'll serve him right, won't it?"

"I bet Johnnie Williams nearly does."

John bored the eyes himself, and cut a gash for a mouth, making jagged teeth in it as you do with the rind of an orange. He rummaged about till he found the lid of a small tin can, and he stuck its edge firmly

inside one half of the turnip and fastened his end of candle on it by melting some of the tallow. He had to handle the head very carefully, for they had scraped it very thin and pared the outside down like an apple; and then with the string he bound the two halves firmly together. Williams came in as he was doing this, and took Master John by the ear.

"Look there, my lad!" he cried, pointing to the litter of parings on the floor; "one body's work, ye are! Who said ye could come into my toolhouse making your nasty boggarts? Now fetch a bucket and clear up every bit o' that mess!"

"I shan't!" said John; and Johnnie Williams pulled a face behind his father's arm.

"Fetch a bucket at once!" So John, after a few saucy answers, gathered up the parings and carried them outside.

"P'raps he'll *quite* die!" Eddy whispered gleefully when Williams had turned his back. "Is a ghost the same as a nasty boggart, John?"

The light of the short afternoon began to fail, and the crows to fly homeward to the plantation. Over the turnip-field the sun became a smoky, bulging disc, and then showed only a rusty upper edge almost lost in the mists. Lapwings wheeled and cried plaintively across the ploughed land; the cart rumbled off down the road; and a light appeared in a kitchen window. The boys got an old besom and an apron, finished their spectre, and set it behind the hedge near the wicket-gate; and then a maid sought them and bore them off to tea.

In Eddy's little nursery-room the lamps were already lighted on the walls, and a merry fire danced and twinkled on the bright bars of the high steel fire-guard. Their feet were cold and their hands purple, for it was a raw afternoon; and the window showed a chilly grey-blue square. As they had tea, Eddy noticed how quickly this square became dimmer and darker, and how pleasantly the firelight wavering on the ceiling was reflected in it.

By and by he pushed his plate aside and looked at John; his brows were drawn upward a little.

"I say, John," he said, "shall we have a soldier-battle?"

"We're going out to do the ghost; it's nearly dark now," John replied.

"It isn't nearly midnight," said Eddy, a little troubled; "we might have just a short soldier-battle——"

"Ghosts *are* better at midnight," John mused; "but they won't let us stay up. They stop haunting people when the cock crows; they have to go back to the churchyard then."

"I should like just a *little* soldier-battle."

"All right."

There was a little square table with a green cloth in the nursery-room, and George, away at Oxford, had shown Eddy how to put books and lumpy things under the cloth, so as to make green hills and valleys. Eddy got out the soldiers from the cupboard, and they shared them and marshalled their forces; but somehow Eddy did not enjoy the battle very much. He was beginning to wish they hadn't made a ghost. Ghosts are one thing in the afternoon, but different when the November night seems to come all of a sudden. He kept saying the word over to himself; but instead of becoming more familiar, it seemed to become less so. With the darkling evening it was no longer fair and mild and beaming, but a grinning, flapping thing that said "Moo-o-o!" and scared people to death. They finished the battle, and Eddy said quaveringly: "'N wouldn't it be fun to get *all* the toys out 'f the cupboard, John, 'n have them on the floor?"

"Bother the toys! It's dark now; let's put the ghost up!"

"Yes. . . . Why do they call them nasty boggarts, John?"

"Oh, that's only Williams."

"Aren't there any kind ghosts, John?"

"Why, you're frightened!" John exclaimed.

"No, I'm not; 'n you'll *never* play with the toys when *I* want——"

"You are—you are! I said you would be, an' you said you wouldn't! Frightened of a turnip ghost, 'at you've made yourself!"

"I'm not frightened 'f anything you're not!"

"Then come on, if you aren't. *I* have to go home all through the plantation, an' I won't have Williams with me, an' I won't run or anything! I dare you! Moo-o-o!"

"I dare, then; I dare, I dare!"

As they passed through the kitchen, one of the maids called after them.

"You're not to go out again, Master Eddy; and Williams must take Master John home."

"I shan't have Williams to take me home, an' we're going out!" John replied defiantly; and he purloined a box of matches as the maid resumed her work.

A single inky band, low in the sky, was all

that was left of the November day; the rest—the hedge beyond the toolhouse, the dark orchard, the kitchen-garden where the glass of a single cucumber-frame glimmered—was a huddle and throng of shadows. The ashen-grey smoke that still poured from the fire was visible for a yard or two and then was lost. It seemed to have suddenly got very chilly as well as very dark; and Eddy kept one hand on the wall as far as the corner of the scullery buildings. In letting it go at the corner, Eddy felt that he was parting company with everything that was pleasant and comfortable and known, and entering a dreary region where at any moment a ghost might rise over a wall or hedge, and lurking in the shadows were the shapes of people who had been frightened to death. He followed John timorously, his fingers fumbling with one another; and by and by he caught John's hand.

"John," he said, with a little catch in his throat, ". . . 'f *I* come, I'm not frightened, am I?"

John made no reply. They passed the fire, reached the wicket-gate, and John let go Eddy's hand. The gate gave a click and closed behind them. John advanced along the hedge, his hands putting aside the damp, whipping twigs, and Eddy followed a step at a time.

"Hallo!" John exclaimed suddenly in surprise, "why, it's gone!"

Eddy gave a quick little sigh; but he would not have admitted that he was unspeakably thankful. "It's gone back to the churchyard," he said. "Let's go home, John."

"Somebody's taken it. I bet it's Johnnie Williams——!"

"Has he?" Eddy whispered aghast. "'N didn't he drop dead?"

"Did you drop dead, stupid, when you helped to make it? I'm going to find it; you can stop here if you're frightened."

"I—I—you're bigger 'n me, John——" Eddy said in a faltering voice.

"Well, come on, then."

They searched the entire length of the hedge, but found no ghost. They advanced a dozen yards into the orchard, but it was not there. It was not to be seen about the clayey part that sloped down to the pond; and when they crawled through the gap in the fence, they could not see it as they looked towards Duck Point. "I don't care; I'm going to get it," John muttered determinedly. "Ugh! What's that?" But it was only the old drake, who, hearing steps, screamed harshly in the night.



"One man was just tilting the cart."

John stopped to think, and Eddy looked fearfully round. In the daytime he knew Duck Point, the gap in the fence, the beginning of the plantation; but he had never noticed how at night the sycamore tossed up two dark, menacing arms, as if it would fling itself on him, nor the shallow hole into which he stumbled with a little cry, as if it had been yards deep, nor the mysterious, threatening forms of the top of the beech plantation. All was changed and full of strangeness; but he would not take John's hand again, because John said he was afraid.

John stopped suddenly.

"I bet I know!" he exclaimed. "He's put it in the plantation, to frighten me when I go home!"

He lingered for a minute, as if he would turn back; and Eddy gulped with the suspense. Then suddenly he set off again. Eddy followed him, and in a few minutes they reached the edge of the dark wood. John advanced alone a dozen yards, and Eddy waited; then he heard John pushing further forward still. Suddenly there came a distant shout: "There it is! Come and look!"

There was no undergrowth among the beeches, only dead leaves that rustled and clogged your feet; but some of the branches swung and swept downwards, so that a man would have had to stoop to walk under them. Eddy's heart had given a jump at John's call, and he had set his hands against the smooth bole of the nearest beech, as if he were playing at "dodging." From tree to tree he advanced thus, craning his small face round as he came to each tree; perhaps ghosts couldn't frighten you if they only saw an edge of your face—and then, from behind the seventh tree, he saw it.

Its head was lodged against the branches, leering wickedly across them, as if over bars—a horrible sight. A dull, unearthly glare surrounded it; something grey and waving stirred half behind the bole, disappeared, and appeared again; and as Eddy sidled fearfully away from his tree, moving as if he were walking a tight-rope, the face of the ghost started out suddenly. Two shining eyes, villainously close together, were stuck high in its forehead; its jagged, luminous grin spread fiendishly half way round its face; and its sallow visage was mottled and bloated and patched. Not for his life dared Eddy have approached a yard nearer; and he waited spellbound for the "Moo-o-o!" that even fat Ellen, the buxom cook at the Court, had hardly survived.

And now that he had found it, bold John himself did not seem over-confident. He, too, hesitated, and at the sight of his timorousness, Eddy's own fears gripped his heart more tightly.

"Let's go back 'n send Williams," he whispered faintly.

"Shall we?" John replied; and then the memory of his own boasting seemed to quicken his courage a little. "No, I won't," he said shortly; "it's our ghost, an' I'm going to get it."

"Oh, don't, John!" Eddy wailed.

"I shall," said John.

The leaves swished and rustled as he diminished the distance between himself and the apparition by a yard or two. Eddy remained as rooted where he stood as the beeches themselves. "John!" he called shakily; "John!" But John was a dozen yards away. Eddy dropped to his hands and knees, for the comfort of the solid earth; he watched, fascinated by the hideous, shining face, devoured by such a fear as grown folk only know now and then in the abject cowardice that visits them in a nightmare. And soon John disappeared from his sight altogether.

But it was not the dreaded "Moo-o-o!" that came next—it was a sudden harsh clangour, the sound of a fall on the wet earth—a short cry, and then an appalling silence. Eddy cried shrilly, and then again and again. Only a low moan answered him. The boggart grinned triumphantly: it had frightened John to death, then—John, Eddy's playmate and friend, with whom he had sailed his boats and shot his air-gun and stalked the plantation for savage foes... For himself, Eddy could not have moved; but for John... he did not know whether his fears left him or not. All at once he shut his mouth tight and ran forward.

John lay on the ground, breathing hard. Near him, in the light of the ghost, were the bucket, the two old canisters, and the piece of cord that Johnnie Williams had set, to trip whoever should approach it. Eddy called him, but he only grunted; and then Eddy, muttering to himself rapidly: "I'm not frightened, I'm not frightened, I'm not frightened," ran to the ghost. He seized the broomstick and dislodged it from the sweeping branches.

"Don't be frightened to death, John!" he cried eagerly; "it's on'y our ghost what we made, 'n it hasn't moo-o-oed—John—look!"

John stirred, moved his leg stiffly, and



"A dull, unearthly glare surrounded it."

put his hand to his barked shin and then to his bumped head. "I don't care how big Johnnie Williams is," he muttered, "I'll fight him to-morrow."

"'N look, John, you can take its string off, 'n it comes in two!" Eddy cried, tugging feverishly at the cord; "'n it can't frighten anybody to death then, 'n I'm *touching it!*"

The homely smell of a tallow candle rose, and the two halves of the turnip came apart. John muttered: "Beastly sneak, Johnnie

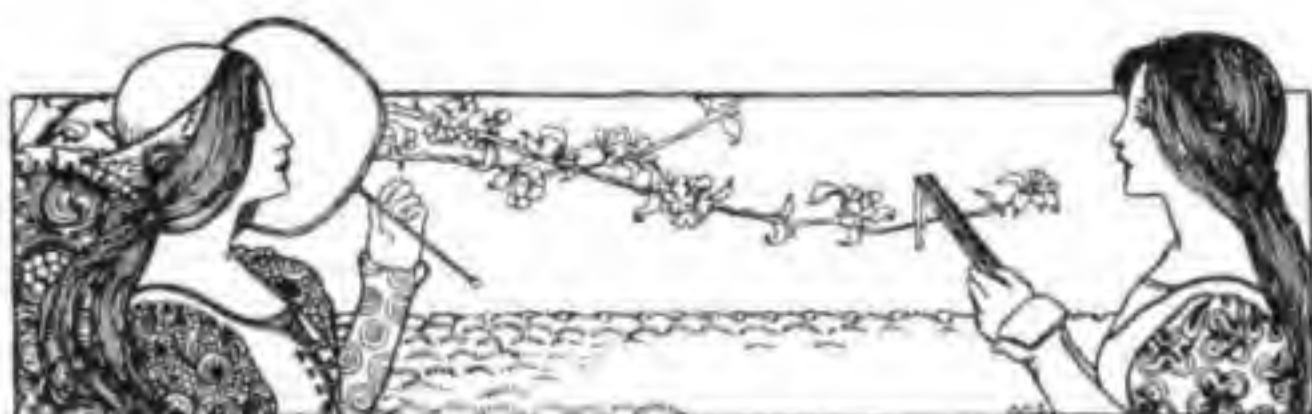
Williams!" and he struggled to his feet and pulled his stocking down to look at his shin. He looked up suddenly.

"I say, Eddy, you are white!" he said; "awfully funny——"

Eddy's lip trembled.

"White doesn't mean you're frightened, John, does it?" he asked wistfully.

"*Rather!*" John replied; and they took the broomstick and apron and the two halves of the turnip, and set off back through the plantation.



PRISONERS AND CAPTIVES.

ABOVE the voices of the street
 I heard a voice my heart held dear;
 So loud it rang, so piercing sweet,
 I could not choose but stand to hear.
 Each mellow phrase, each quick repeat
 Cried to me through the young Spring night,
 And lo, within a glance's flight,
 Through din of wheels and hurrying feet,
 Lit by the street-lamp's amber light,
 A prisoned thrush sang high and clear.

The gold lights glimmered, blurred with tears—
 Powerless to save, I passed you by
 As one who dreams, and dreaming, hears
 His own doom of captivity. . . .
 Ah, Little Brother, we are peers,
 Though brief for you the time shall be
 Ere the Dark Warden sets you free;
 You will be free betimes, while I,
 Pent in the Labyrinth of Years,
 Sing of the Spring that's lost to me.

ROSAMUND MARRIOTT WATSON.

PUGSBY'S MANUFACTURE OF DIAMONDS.

By A. W. BUSBRIDGE.



It is impossible to remain long in the presence of my friend Pugsby without being to some extent infected by the enthusiasm which pervades him, and the atmosphere all around him, for discovery, invention, and improvement. Personally I am the last man in the world to attempt to find out anything new in Nature, or to invent anything whatsoever. It will take me all my time to learn what other people have done in that line, and I am quite satisfied to leave all the new ground—as long as there is any—to more ingenious folks, and to take what benefits they give me, when they come along, without asking questions or attempting to “go one better” on my own account.

Not so Pugsby. I made a casual remark in his presence the other day as to the weather being very close and sultry. He seemed struck, as if I had said something brilliant or clever—which I am quite sure I never intended—and observing: “That’s worth looking into,” turned abruptly homewards. Knowing his moods pretty well, I let him go. A few days afterwards he came to me in great spirits, saying: “I have solved that problem.”

“Which?” I queried doubtfully, for I had forgotten the circumstance.

“Why, what the difference is between the atmosphere on a close and sultry day, and one when it is equally hot and yet quite bearable.”

“Oh!” I responded with a laugh; “but you needn’t explain it to me. The experience is enough for me.”

“Perhaps it is,” he replied a little curtly. “But all the same, it is intensely interesting to note the minute differences in the amount of electricity with which the air is said (for want of a better term) to be charged at different times, and the effect of a cap or extinguisher of clouds in keeping down

certain gases that should rise to the upper layers and form new combinations there.” He was well on the way now, and could not be stopped, but I have forgotten the main points of his explanation, and I would not weary you by repeating them.

But it was of the diamond discovery, or invention, that I started to speak. Pugsby had been hard at work for a long time in secret, and I had seen very little of him; but one day towards the end of the winter of 19—he sent for me, and I knew he had something of importance to tell me. I obeyed his summons promptly, and found him in the laboratory, where he spends most of his time.

“Jackson,” he said, as I advanced gingerly towards him, threading my way through what I regarded as the pitfalls of the place, “I have made a great hit.”

“I am very glad to hear that,” I replied. “I imagined it was something of the kind when I got your urgent message. What is it? Wireless telephony, or a cure for sea-sickness?”

“Ah! you are disposed to be both frivolous and incredulous, my friend,” he placidly responded. “You should cultivate a little faith. But, joking aside, what do you think of these?”

To say that I was astounded would be the very exaggeration of rhetorical restraint, for “these” were such a collection of diamonds as surely few men ever had the privilege of looking upon at one time. They varied in size from minute specks to stones as large as a filbert, and there were in all, I should imagine, something like a hundred of them.

“Good Heavens, Pugsby!” I gasped, “where did you get such a magnificent collection? They must be worth a fortune.” I had not the faintest idea what they were really likely to be valued at, as my experience of precious stones had been limited up to that time to the ordinary purchases that a man makes of articles of jewellery for his own wear, or as presents on auspicious occasions in the lives of his friends and relations.

Pugsby answered my last remark, and ignored for the time the question with which I had prefaced it. “They are,” he said quietly; “or, rather, I have reason to hope that they will be presently.”

"Let me explain," he went on, after a pause of bewilderment on my part, and amused observation on his. "I have often told you that my method of investigation is mainly based on analysis. I discover what a certain object is composed of by taking it to pieces, as it were. Applied to substances, there is nothing strikingly novel and original about that; but I apply the principle also to processes. When I have discovered the concomitants, and the force that brings them together, I am at the secret of Nature's method of manufacture so far as it applies to inorganic things. What is there then remaining that can prevent me from producing the same results as Nature does? Nothing but my inability to combine my materials in Nature's own way. If I am unable to reconstruct after analysis, I fail. And though it seems easy enough in theory to build up what has been taken down, it is not so by any means. We have not arrived as yet at a sufficient knowledge of the forces that are in action all around us to enable us to do what we feel we ought. I have failed hundreds of times, as you know well enough, but I think I have succeeded this time. Almost succeeded, I ought to say, for I have managed to turn pieces of charcoal into these stones which resemble diamonds."

"You don't mean to tell me that you have *made* these beautiful jewels?" I interjected, ignoring his reservation.

"Yes, I do," he answered. "So far as they are made, they are of my own manufacture. But if you were to examine each one carefully, and with an experienced eye, you would see that there is a flaw in every one of them. Not one, I am sorry to say, is absolutely perfect. Even as they are, they would doubtless have a certain value in the market, but I should decidedly object to putting forth a number of imperfections. It would be altogether against my principles, and I have no doubt that in the end it would be bad policy also. Now I feel confident that my method, as far as it goes, is correct, but to conduct the final operation, specially constructed machinery is required. That machinery will be extremely costly, and I am almost at the end of my resources. So I want your advice."

I may explain that my friend was a strange mixture of thoughtless enthusiasm and caution. Without some restraint he would have spent all his patrimony on his researches and experiments; but knowing the temptation to which he was likely to give way, he had purchased an annuity of several

hundreds a year with part of the fortune that an uncle had bequeathed to him. "The good dog Pugsby is well chained," he used to remark when he mentioned the subject; "for if he were not, he would certainly break loose and, being unmuzzled, become dangerous." He had never intended trying to make money for himself out of his inventions, which as a rule he had made public as soon as he had perfected them. Now I saw that unless he was to give up his most cherished occupation in life, it was necessary that he should for once take a commercial standpoint. And now I understood how it was that he had worked for so long in absolute secrecy. I did not hesitate. "You should become 'The Great Diamond Manufacturing Company, Limited,' I replied. "Capital, so much, in so many shares of £100 each. How much do you want to go on laying down your plant with?"

"Oh, I dare say £100,000," he answered.

"A mere bagatelle," I replied. "Capital, £250,000: £100,000 to be spent in developing the business; £150,000 to be paid to the inventor. Of that you will take £50,000 in cash and £100,000 in shares. And there you are, ready to go on your way inventing and rejoicing. But what is your final process?"

"Jackson," he replied, "I am not sure that I am able to tell you, or that you will understand me fully if I do. But the agglomeration of molecules which constitutes a diamond is made up by the atoms being placed together in a particular way, and by a certain defined pressure. I have discovered the general principles of the way in which they should go together, but I cannot yet apply the requisite amount of force in the right way. Specially constructed machinery will be needed for that, and it will have to be so nicely adjusted that it must be very costly. I shall require also to provide for a closer assimilation to the action of the inert forces of the earth in the earlier stages of the work than I have yet been able to accomplish."

I pretended to understand, but I am bound to admit that his remarks had little meaning to me. If I had not seen the first-fruits of his experiments, I should have been very doubtful of his ultimate success. But if a man could do so much, how could I question his ability to do more? Yet more than once in the conversation that ensued I urged him to rest satisfied with his achievement, and realise a handsome sum for himself by selling the stones as they were. On



"In the laboratory, where he spends most of his time."

this, however, he was adamant. Faulty stones were already plentiful enough, he declared, and a few perfect ones would be better than many with flaws in them. So we finally decided that the firm of Dawkins and Edelstein, well-known as financiers and promoters of companies, should be invited to take the matter in hand and start the new diamond company with such a title as should seem good to them. As I had some knowledge of the law (having been designed

for the Woolsack by a pair of sanguine parents, and kept in the backwaters of the profession by a calm and contented disposition, a comfortable income, and no great liking for hard drudgery, to say nothing of a lack of the necessary intellectual qualifications), I undertook to conduct the introductory correspondence and arrange an interview.

It need hardly be said that Messrs. Dawkins and Edelstein were quite prepared to take

all the necessary steps, and only required to be convinced that my friend's claims were genuine. After a few letters had passed, an interview was arranged, and the agents wrote to say that their manager, a Mr. Green, would call at Pugsby's house on the following Thursday afternoon. Thursday consequently found me in my friend's little den, a room on the second floor adjoining his laboratory on one side, and containing one window looking out southward over the road to Sellington Station, about a mile and a half away, and one eastward commanding a view of the great highway and the land sloping away to Sandybeach, the well-known seaside resort, distant about six miles. Mr. Green had arranged to be at Smethbourne (perhaps I have omitted to say that this is the name of our rural retreat) at about 4.30, and he proposed to catch a fast train at Sandybeach at 7.0. He did not disappoint us in one respect at least, for it was scarcely half-past four when his cab came into sight on the main road, and a few minutes later he was ushered into the room.

"Ah, shentlemen," he remarked, "I am delighted that I find you bot' here and ready for business. It haf gifen me some fear that one of you could perhaps by such brief notice be discomposed."

We both concealed as well as we could our surprise at hearing a foreign accent from a gentleman with so English a name as Green, but our visitor remarked our embarrassment and seemed highly amused. He was good enough to explain that he was a German who had lived many years in London, and that when he became naturalised he had changed his name from Grünstein to Green. "I did tink," he added, "I could not vell become Mr. Greenstone." There was a *bonhomie* and charm about the old fellow's manner (he seemed to be about sixty) that rendered reserve impossible, and we were soon chatting on the subject of his visit as if we had known each other for years.

Pugsby gave him information as to the process of the manufacture up to the point at present reached, in fuller detail than I can attempt to reproduce, and at length he drew out the drawer containing the precious product of his research and skill.

"*Ach! Gott im Himmel!*" burst from Mr. Green's lips as he saw the sparkling heap. "Pardon, my friends, that I tumble into the *Deutsch*. Your poor tongue is all not enough. You have really all these stones made? For true?"

"Yes, certainly," said Pugsby, with a quiet

smile; "I could not otherwise have hoped to possess so many."

"No, truly," said Mr. Green, who, as his wits returned, seemed more capable of taking the commercial view once again. "But it will be needful that someone prove that. None will believe on the mere word even of a so honourable man. I doubt not—but the shareholder! He is by his nature suspicious, and must see either with his own eyes or with someone else's. Can you in one hour make me shoost von leetle stone? Zen I shall tell all the people vith money, and all vill be vell." Mr. Green's German accent and use of German construction in his sentences seemed to ebb and flow with the pressure of his feelings. I noted it as a peculiarity at the time, and determined to study the point as opportunity should offer in the days to come.

"I cannot produce a diamond at all in that brief time," said Pugsby, "or I should swamp the market in a week. But I can show you the various stages of manufacture in the laboratory. I have already arranged all the details possible so that you may see for yourself, as the showmen say, that there is absolutely no deception. But if you should require to examine all the steps and actually see me make them, I am afraid that I should be compelled to ask you to remain here for a very considerable time. The fact is, that I began on all the stones you have seen, and took them to what I may call the fourth stage, before I had found out how to go further. Then, when I had made the next step secure, I was able to go on with all of them, and they are now awaiting the final process."

"*Ach! Zo,*" said our visitor, "vill you then be so good and take me to see the so interesting factory that you have here?"

Pugsby rose and led the way to the laboratory. Mr. Green and I followed, talking somewhat excitedly of the prospects of the venture. My friend was soon hard at work doing something to the machinery, and quite oblivious to everything else that might be going on around him. He used to say that the habit of concentration and withdrawal from the ordinary surroundings of life was one of the most valuable assets of an inventor; but what he called concentration, some irreverent folk would be inclined to describe as absent-mindedness. Still, as he had no wife, that mattered very little, I used to tell him.

Just what conversation passed between Mr. Green and myself while we were waiting



“Ach! Gott im Himmel!”

for the curtain to be drawn up, I do not well remember, and I doubt not that it was of little importance. But I particularly noticed the keenness of our guest in looking out in what I thought trifling matters for evidence of the inventive skill of Mr. Pugsby.

He excused himself with what I told him was quite unnecessary vigour for his curiosity, and at the same time remarked that it seemed very strange in such a place to see only the ordinary locks on the doors. It gave me great pleasure to be able to assure him that this was by no means the case, and as Pugsby seemed likely still to keep us waiting for some little time, I took him back to the door by which we had entered the

laboratory—the only one, by the way—and pointed out his error. Between the den and the laboratory there were two doors, one of the ordinary kind, and the other a baize-covered screen to keep out the draught. I explained to him that the lock on the first-named, innocent as it looked, was of a peculiar construction. The key was on the side of the den, and I showed him that one turn locked it in the ordinary way, while a second shot two bolts, something like those in the doors of fireproof safes, into niches at the top and bottom of the framework surrounding the door. Sliding the knob to the left, I pointed out, would lock these bolts in their places, and pushing the little button on the

underside of the lock to the right would put the hinges of the door out of gear. The baize-covered screen which was on the laboratory side had no fastenings at all.

By this time I observed that Pugsby seemed to have finished his preparations and to be ready for us to examine his processes. When we came up to him, he had a small piece of charcoal in his hand.

"This is the raw material," he said. "The diamond consists of pure carbon crystals, and my process is to disintegrate this charcoal, drive out that which is not carbon, crystallise the remainder, and then build up the diamond with those crystals. You are no doubt aware, Mr. Green, that science declares that there are interstices between the molecules which make up even the hardest and most solid substances in Nature. The diamond is no exception to that rule, but its particles are placed nearer to each other than those of any other known object. I have produced the crystals, but at present, though I am quite confident that I know how it should be done, I have not the means to apply the proper amount of force to the particles to make them cohere. The stones I have made are faulty, not because I have put the atoms together incorrectly, but because I have not the means to force them quite close enough to each other without crushing them."

Mr. Green showed a deep interest in the subject. "But," he said, "can you not show us some of these performances?"

"Oh, yes," replied my friend; "that is exactly what I have brought you here for." He proceeded to set some machinery in motion by moving several levers. "This piece of charcoal," he said, "is now to be disintegrated." He placed it in a kind of mortar, and there was a sound of grinding, mingled with a simultaneous outbreak of sneezing on the part of Mr. Green. "*Ach!*" he exclaimed, "it is ze d-d-diamond dust. It is snuff of precious stones. . . . It vill soon pass. . . . No, it stop not. . . . I vill mine *Tuschentuch bringen*. . . . I haf him . . . in mine overcoat left . . . in the anteroom."

He walked quickly away, and just then Pugsby asked me to hand him something that he wanted. I ought perhaps to have accompanied Mr. Green; but, after all, he was not a guest, and was only present on business, where the ordinary rules of politeness need not be punctiliously observed, and so I let him go alone. Pugsby seemed to be rather dissatisfied with the performance of the machine he was working, and, after his usual custom,

was entirely engrossed in his occupation. I doubt whether he had noticed the absence of the third party at all, till at length he looked up and declared that the first portion of the entertainment was over, and he was prepared to go on to the next step and show a very small portion of the second process.

"Wait a moment," I said. "Mr. Green has gone out to get his handkerchief, as the dust set him sneezing. He ought to have been back before this, though," I added. "I will go and see what has become of him."

I started off, pulled open the baize door, and tried to do the same with the other, but it was fast locked! "Pugsby," I shouted, "we are locked in!"

My friend would not believe it at first, but it was even so. The intelligent foreigner had apparently made off, no doubt taking the diamonds with him from the other room. I never was the calm philosopher that Pugsby could be on occasion, and I raged and raved for a time, and relieved my feelings a little by calling myself all the fools in Christendom for letting it be done. The inventor sat down and laughed.

"What!" I shouted, "can you take a loss like that as if it were but a few pieces of glass that he had taken?"

"Why," he replied, "surely I can make another batch?"

"Don't be too sure of that," I retorted. "You may depend, he is only one of a powerful gang, who will take precious good care, one way or another, that you do not, unless they can be certain of getting hold of what you produce."

"Well," he said thoughtfully, "the first thing to do is to get out. That is perhaps not so difficult as our friend calculated on its being."

He went to the other end of the room, and immediately returned with a winchlike instrument, which he applied to an iron nut or screw by the side of the door. "If you will give me a hand with this," he went on, "we shall soon be on the other side."

We turned away in good earnest, and the framework of the door parted at the top, and the whole thing gradually slid down through a kind of enlarged slot. "This is better than going out of the window and down a rope," he added, "for the landing-place at the bottom is not quite so pleasant as it might be." (It was the nettly bank of a moat, in fact.) "It is quicker, too," he went on cheerfully, "than my fire-escape arrangement, which has got a little rusty, so that the iron ladder does not unfold easily in



“‘What does it mean?’”

answer to the pulls of the levers. And it is more certain in its operation than the use of my improved parachute would be, for that is only constructed to carry my weight, and in a wind like the present is apt to take you a little farther than you wish to go. Some day I shall succeed in guiding it.”

By this time the doorway was open, and we lost no time in ascertaining that our visitor was in fact a thief. The diamonds had vanished, and although we knew Mr. Green could not be far away, we recognised that a start of ten minutes in a rural district in the dusk of a February evening was no mean advantage. He had probably had a swift motor-car in waiting not far off, and by this time was several miles away on his road to safety.

Of course, we took immediate steps to inform the police and set the sleuth-hounds

of the law on the track of our genial friend ; and we had a coadjutor which I, at any rate, had for the time overlooked. By means of various mechanical devices of my friend's, cinematographic pictures had been taken of the interview, and a phonographic record was also registered of the conversation, without either Mr. Green or myself being aware of anything unusual going on. Best of all, the final secret photographic record showed our middle-aged gentleman hurriedly taking off his grey beard and moustaches, and his wig, and revealing the features of Robert Grindleton, a man well known to the police, suspected among other things of that famous theft of the Earl of Arktown's jewels on board a Channel steamer, but never proved to have done anything against the law. We were unable to trace him on that night, for he made his way (by means of a motor-cycle, we

afterwards learned), not to some little country station, but straight to London, a distance of some sixty miles. He had not counted on Pugsby's automatic recording angel, and he was arrested the next day at Cannon Street Station, where he was booked for Paris—no doubt with the idea of getting rid of some of his booty.

Grindleton was brought before the magistrates at Ashton and committed for trial at the Assizes in March. The jewels had not been found, but the evidence was too clear to be disputed, and the accused man did not, indeed, attempt any defence at the time. Much interest was exhibited in the case, as it was the first time that records of phonographs and moving pictures had been accepted as evidence in a court of law. When confronted with these, the prisoner was utterly confounded, and he admitted his guilt. But he declined to say how he had succeeded in personating the real Mr. Green, and we could only surmise that some confederate must have been introduced into Messrs. Dawkins and Edelstein's office, who arranged it so that our "Mr. Green" should come to Smethbourne a day earlier than the real one intended doing. The letter I received was a typewritten document, and the signature was forged. The office copy in the firm's letter-book gave Friday as the day of the visit, and the confederate must have seen to it that another was posted instead of the original.

When the Assizes came, Grindleton was sentenced to three years' imprisonment, and we were extremely glad to find that it was not necessary to go into details as to the origin of the jewels. Our acquaintance was then taken to London, where he received a further sentence of seven years for the other affair of the Earl of Arktown.

It was not till then that he gave information where the stones were. He had left them at the parcels' office at the railway station in the name of Barton, and in giving this news he said: "I don't see handing those little things to a railway company; and as they won't keep them for me till I come out, Mr. Pugsby may as well have them. He is a decent sort of a chap, and next to keeping them myself, I would rather he got them back."

Naturally we were jubilant at the pro-

spective recovery of the treasure, and it was not long before we were at the office asking for Mr. Barton's luggage. There were many formalities, but eventually we walked away bearing with us a small leather case. On the way down Pugsby carefully opened the case in the railway carriage to see that the stones were all right.

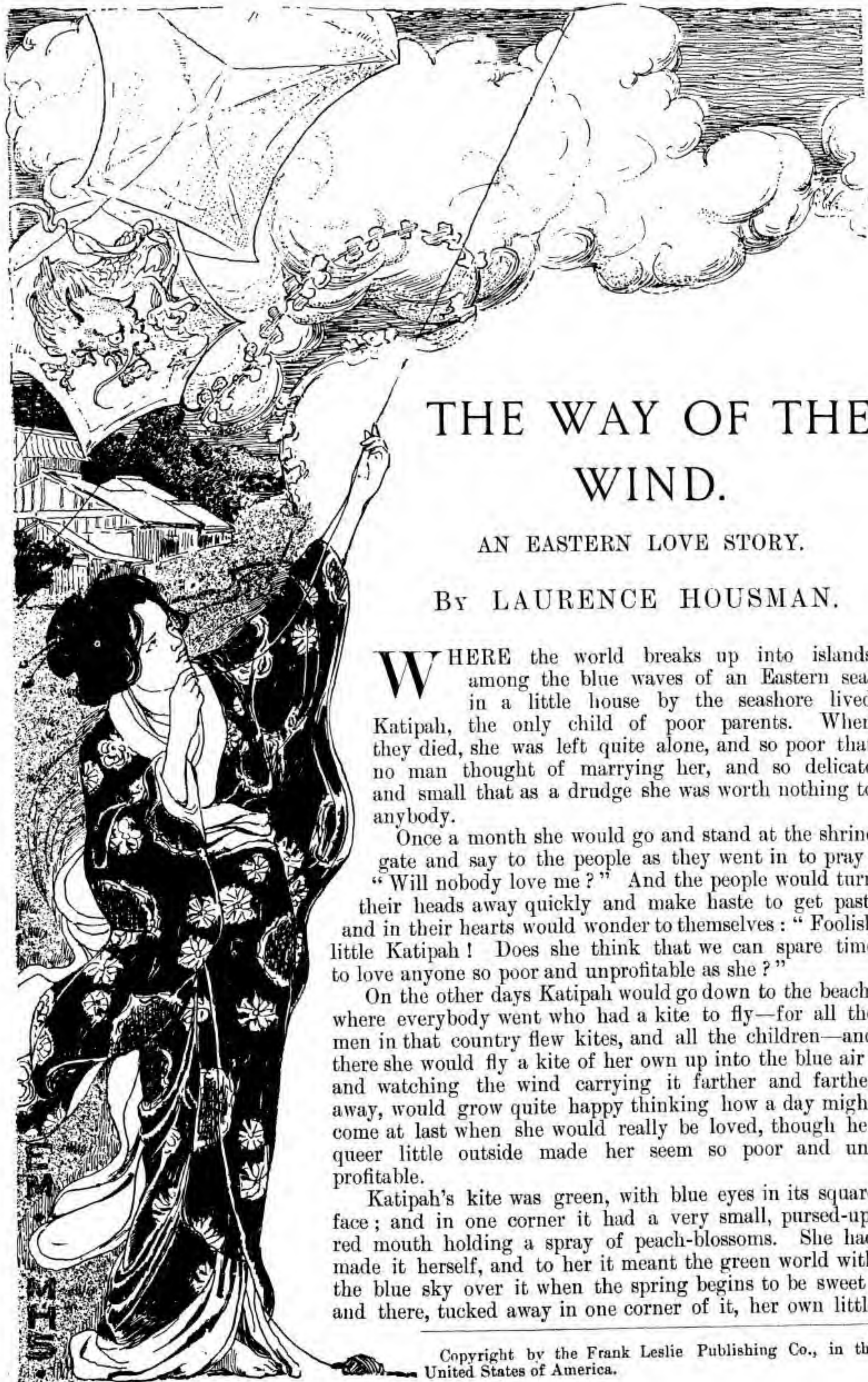
"Good Heavens!" he ejaculated, shaken out of his usual serenity by the sight that met his gaze. "What on earth has happened?" There, laid out on a plush-lined case, were a number of lumps of charcoal.

"What does it mean?" I whispered.

"Mean?" he repeated. "Why, this is what it means. My invention is useless. I can make charcoal look like faulty diamonds for a few days or a few weeks, but there is some flaw in my methods, and exposure to the action of certain gases that exist in the atmosphere, or in some place where these stones have been, dissolves the crystals and reduces them once more to the material from which they were made."

Our journey was not a very lively one. Pugsby was not open to receive consolation from me, and what, indeed, could I offer? But as we neared our destination, I asked him whether he thought the action of the gases he had spoken of was applied to the carbon itself or to any mixture which I understood him to say he added to the disintegrated charcoal before the actual crystals were produced. That set him on the path of inquiry, and he was less downcast for the rest of the time we were together.

About a week afterwards he was quite himself. He had worked it all out, and the joy of having a problem to solve had taken away the depression induced by his failure. He had made up his mind, he said, on the facts he had discovered, that the production of artificially made diamonds was impossible. There was one factor he had overlooked—I could never quite comprehend what it was—but as he declared it made it futile to pursue the matter further, he gave up the attempt, and "The Great Diamond Manufacturing Company, Limited," was never formed. Nor did the facts ever leak out, for Dawkins and Edelstein kept their own counsel, as behoved confidential agents. And as for Grindleton, he died in gaol before the year was out.



THE WAY OF THE WIND.

AN EASTERN LOVE STORY.

By LAURENCE HOUSMAN.

WHERE the world breaks up into islands among the blue waves of an Eastern sea, in a little house by the seashore lived Katipah, the only child of poor parents. When they died, she was left quite alone, and so poor that no man thought of marrying her, and so delicate and small that as a drudge she was worth nothing to anybody.

Once a month she would go and stand at the shrine gate and say to the people as they went in to pray: "Will nobody love me?" And the people would turn their heads away quickly and make haste to get past, and in their hearts would wonder to themselves: "Foolish little Katipah! Does she think that we can spare time to love anyone so poor and unprofitable as she?"

On the other days Katipah would go down to the beach, where everybody went who had a kite to fly—for all the men in that country flew kites, and all the children—and there she would fly a kite of her own up into the blue air; and watching the wind carrying it farther and farther away, would grow quite happy thinking how a day might come at last when she would really be loved, though her queer little outside made her seem so poor and unprofitable.

Katipah's kite was green, with blue eyes in its square face; and in one corner it had a very small, pursed-up, red mouth holding a spray of peach-blossoms. She had made it herself, and to her it meant the green world with the blue sky over it when the spring begins to be sweet; and there, tucked away in one corner of it, her own little

warm mouth, waiting and wishing to be kissed; and out of all that wishing and waiting the blossom of hope was springing, never to be let go.

All around her were hundreds of others flying their kites, and all had some wish or prayer to Fortune. But Katipah's wish and prayer were only that she might be loved.

The silver sandhills lay in loops and chains round the curve of the blue sky, and all along them flocks of gaily coloured kites hovered and fluttered and sprang. And as they went up into the clear air, the wind sighing in the strings was like the crying of a child. "Wahoo! wahoo!" Every kite seemed to cradle the wailings of an invisible infant as it went mounting, spreading its thin apron to the wind.

"Wahoo! wahoo!" sang Katipah's blue-and-green kite. "Shall I ever be loved by anybody?" And Katipah, keeping fast hold of the string, would watch where it mounted and looked so small, and think that surely some day her kite would bring her the only thing she wished much.

Katipah's next-door neighbour had everything that her own lonely heart wished for; not only had she a husband, but a fine baby as well. Yet she was such a jealous, cross-grained body that she seemed to get no happiness out of the fortune Heaven had sent her. Husband and child seemed both to have caught the infection of her bitter temper; all day and night beating and brawling went on; there seemed to be no peace in that house.

But for all that, the woman, whose name was Bimsha, was quite proud of being a wife and mother; and in the daytime, when her man was away, she would look over the fence and laugh at Katipah, crying boastfully: "Don't think you will ever have a husband, Katipah; you are too poor and unprofitable! Look at me and be envious."

One morning in the beginning of the year, Katipah went up on to the hill under the plum-boughs, white with bloom, to gather field-sorrel for her midday meal; and as she stooped with all her hair blowing all over her face, and her skirts knotting and billowing round her pretty brown ankles, she felt as if someone had kissed her from behind.

"That cannot be!" thought Katipah, with her fingers fast on a stalk of field-sorrel; "it is too soon for anything so good to happen." She





picked the sorrel composedly and put it into her basket. But now, not to be mistaken, arms came round her and she *was* kissed.

She stood up and put her hands into her breast, quite afraid lest her little heart, which had grown so light, should be caught by a puff of wind and blown right away out of her bosom, and over the hill and into the sea, and be drowned.

But her eyes could not leave her in doubt: there by her side stood a handsome youth with quick-fluttering, posy-embroidered raiment. His long, dark hair was full of white plum-blossoms, as though he had just pushed his head through the branches above. His hands also were loaded with the same, and they kept sifting out of his long sleeves whenever he moved his arms. Under the hem of his robe, Katipah could see that he had herons' wings bound about his ankles.

"He must be very good," thought Katipah, "to be so beautiful! And indeed he must be very good to kiss poor me!"

"Katipah," said the wonderful youth, "though you do not know me, I know you. It is I who so often helped you to fly your green kite by the shore. I have been up there, and have looked into its blue eyes, and kissed its little red mouth which held the peach-blossom. It was I who made songs in its strings for your heart to hear.

"I am the West Wind, Katipah, the wind that brings fine weather. 'Gammon-gata' you must call me, who bring back the wings that fly, till the winter be over. And now I have come down to earth to fetch you away and make you my wife. Will you come, Katipah?"

"I will come, Gammon-gata!" said Katipah, and she crouched and kissed his feet; then she stood up and let herself go into his arms.

"To come with me," said the Wind, "you need to have much courage; if you have not, you must wait till you learn it. But none the less for that shall you be the wife of Gammon-gata, for I am the gate of the wild geese, as my name says, and my heart is foolish with love of you."

Gammon-gata took her up in his arms and swung



with her this way and that, tossing his way through blossom and leaf; and the sunlight became an eddy of gold round her, and wind and laughter seemed to become part of her being, so that she was all giddy and dazed and, glad when at last Gammon-gata set her down.

"Stand still, my little one," he cried; "stand still while I put on your bridal veil for you; then your blushes shall look like a rose-bush in snow!"

So Katipah stood with her feet in the green sorrel, and Gammon-gata went up into the plum-tree and shook, till from head to foot she was showered with white blossoms.

"How beautiful you seem to me!" cried Gammon-gata when he returned to the ground.

Then he lifted her once more and set her in the top of a plum-tree, and going below, cried up to her: "Leap, little wife of the Wind, and let me see that you have courage!"

Katipah looked long over the deep space that lay between them, and trembled. Then she fixed her eyes fast upon those of her lover and leaped, for in the laughter of his eyes she had lost all her fear.

He caught her half-way in the air as she fell. "You are not really brave," said he; "if I had shut my eyes, you would not have jumped."

"If you had shut your eyes just then," cried Katipah, "I should have died for fear."

He set her once more in the tree-top and disappeared from her sight. "Come down to me, Katipah!" she heard his voice calling all around her.

Clinging fast to the topmost bough, "Oh, Gammon-gata," she cried, "let me see your eyes, and I will come!"

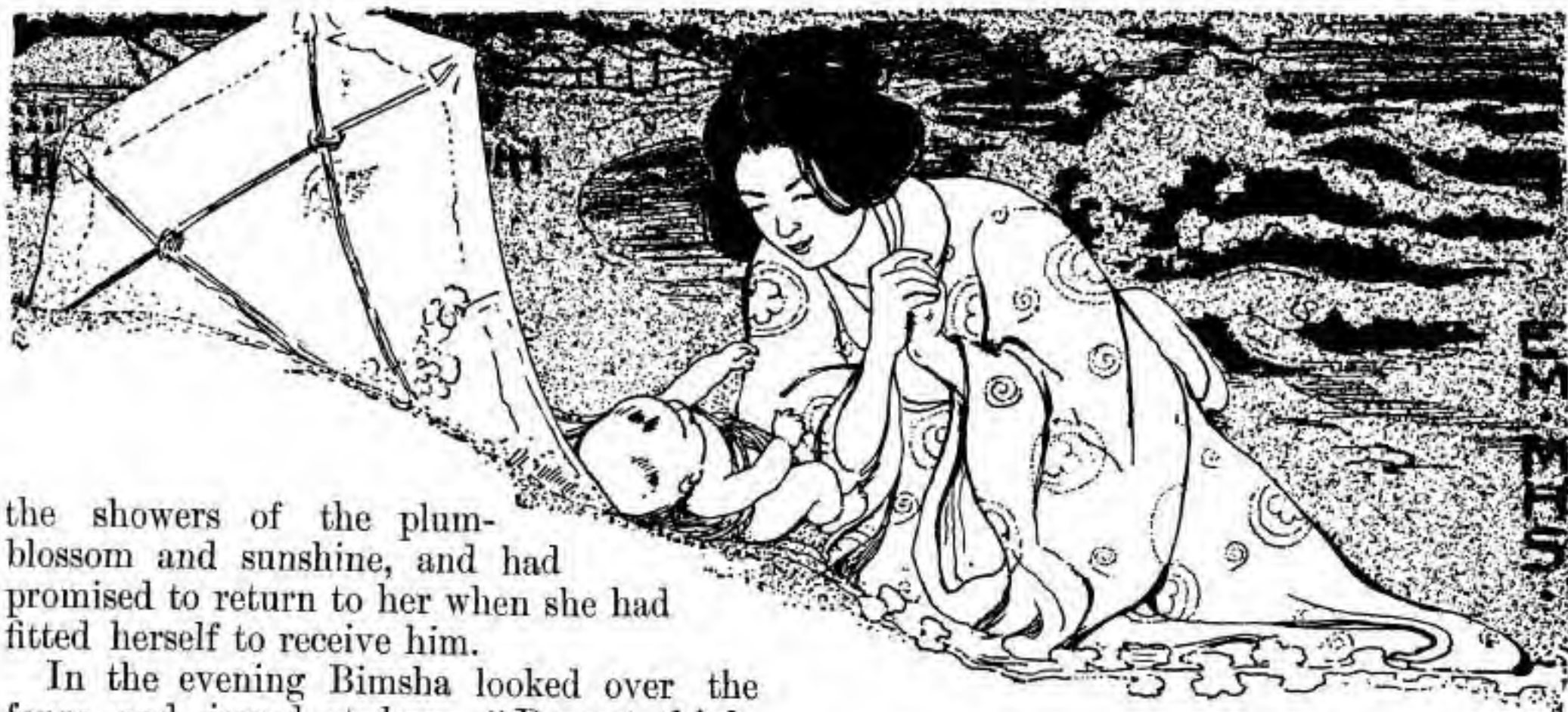
Then with darkened brow he appeared to her again out of his blasts, and took her in his arms and lifted her down a little sadly till her feet touched safe earth. And he blew away the beautiful veil of blossoms with which he had showered her, while Katipah stood like a shamed child and watched it go, shredding itself to pieces in the spring sunshine.

And Gammon-gata, kissing her tenderly, said: "Go home, Katipah, and learn to have courage! And when you have learned it, I will be faithful and will come to you again. Only remember, however long we may be parted, and whatever winds blow ill-fortune up to your

door, Gammon-gata will watch over you. For in deed and truth you are the wife of the West Wind now, and truly he loves you, Katipah!"

"Oh, Gammon-gata!" cried Katipah, "tell the other winds, when they come, to blow courage into me, and to blow me back to you; and do not let that be long!"

"I will tell them," said Gammon-gata; and suddenly he was gone. Katipah saw a drift of white petals borne out of the orchard and away to sea; and she knew that there went Gammon-gata, the beautiful youth who, loving her so well, had made her his wife between



the showers of the plum-blossom and sunshine, and had promised to return to her when she had fitted herself to receive him.

In the evening Bimsha looked over the fence and jeered at her. "Do not think, Katipah," she cried, "that you will ever get a husband, for all your soft looks! You are too poor and unprofitable."

Katipah folded her meek little body together like a concertina when it shuts, and squatted to earth in great contentment of spirit. "Silly Bimsha!" said she, "I already have a husband—a fine one! Ever so much finer than yours!"

Bimsha turned pale and cold with envy to hear her say that; for she feared that Katipah was too good and simple to tell her an untruth even in mocking. But she put a brave face upon the matter, saying only: "I will believe in that fine husband when I see him!"

"Oh, you will see him," answered Katipah, "if you look high enough! But he is far away over *your* head, Bimsha; and you will not hear him beating me at night, for that is not his way!"

At this soft answer Bimsha went away into her house in a fury; and Katipah laughed to herself; then she sighed and said: "Oh, Gammon-gata, return to me quickly, lest my word shall seem false to Bimsha, who hates me!"

Every day after this Bimsha thrust her face over the fence to say: "Katipah, where is this fine husband of yours? He does not seem to come home very often."

Katipah answered slily: "He comes home late, when it is dark, and goes away very early, almost before it is light. It is not necessary for his happiness that he should see *you*."

"Certainly there is a change in Katipah," thought Bimsha; "she has become saucy with her tongue." But her envious heart would not let her leave the matter in peace; night and morning she cried to Katipah: "Katipah, where is your fine husband?"

And Katipah laughed at her, thinking to

herself: "To begin with, I will not be afraid of anything Bimsha may say. Let Gammon-gata know that!"


And now every day she looked up into the sky to see what wind was blowing; but east, or north, or south, it was never the one wind that she looked for.

The East Wind came from the sea, bringing rain, and beat upon Katipah's door at night. Then Katipah would rise and open, and standing in the downpour would cry: "East Wind, East Wind, go and tell your brother, Gammon-gata, that I am not afraid of you any more than I am of Bimsha!"

One night, the East Wind, when she said that, pulled a tile off Bimsha's house and threw it at her; and Katipah ran in and hid behind the door in a great hurry. After that she had less to say when the East Wind came and blew under her gable and rattled at her door. "Oh, Gammon-gata," she sighed, "if I might only set eyes on you, I would fear nothing at all!"

When the weather grew fine, Katipah returned to the shore and flew her kite as she had always done before the love of Gammon-gata had entered her heart. Now and then, as she did so, the wind would change softly and begin blowing from the west. Then little Katipah would pull lovingly at the string and cry: "Oh, Gammon-gata! have you got fast hold of it up there?"

One day, after dusk, when she, the last of all the flyers, hauled down her kite to earth, she found a heron's feather fastened among the strings. Katipah knew who had sent that, and kissed it a thousand times over; nor did she mind for many days afterwards what Bimsha might say, because the heron's feather lay so close to her heart, warming it with the hope of Gammon-gata's return.



But as weeks and months passed on, and Bimsha still did not fail to say each morning : " Katipah, where is your fine husband to-day ? " the timid heart grew faint with waiting.

" Alas ! " thought Katipah, " if Heaven would only send me a child, I would show it to her ; she would believe me easily then."

And now every day and all day long she sent up her kite from the seashore, praying that a child might be born to her and convince Bimsha of the truth. Everyone said : " Katipah is mad about kite-flying. See how early she goes, and how late she stays ; hardly any weather keeps her indoors."

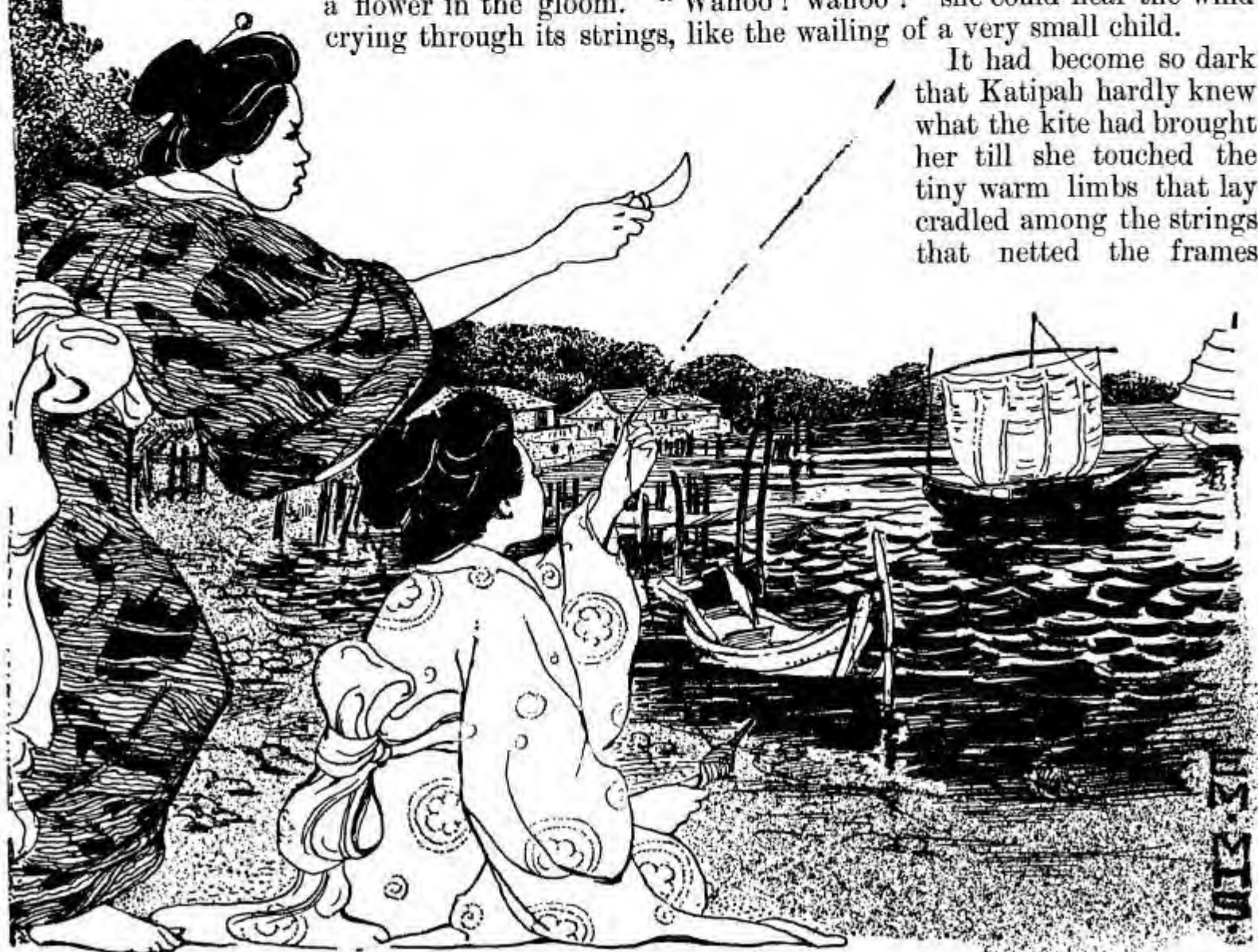
One day the West Wind came full-breathed over land and sea, and Katipah was among the first on the beach to send up her messenger with word to Gammon-gata of the thing for which she prayed.

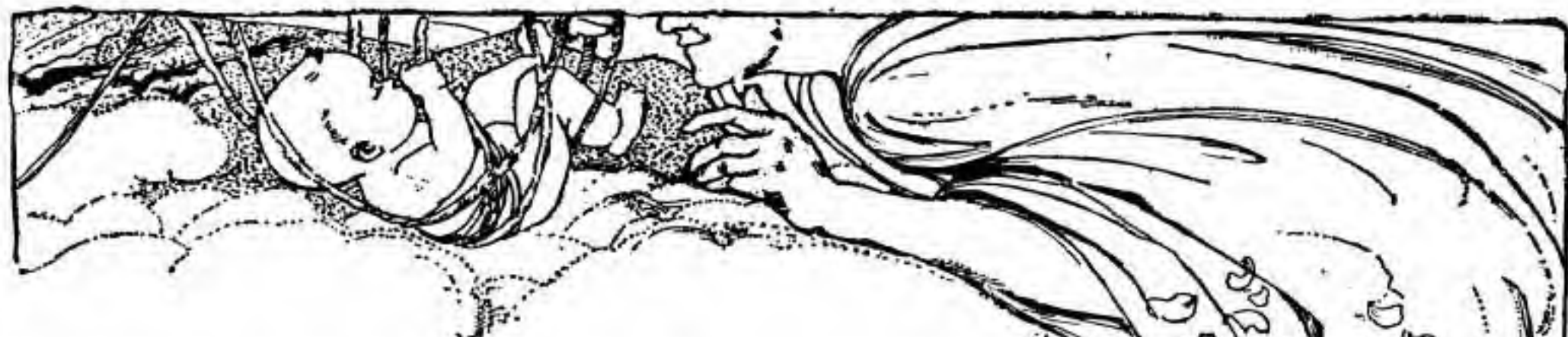
" Gammon-gata," she sighed, " the voice of Bimsha afflicts me daily ; my heart is bruised by the mockery she casts at me. Did I not love thee under the plum-tree, Gammon-gata ? Ask of Heaven, therefore, that a child may be born to me ; ever so small let it be, and Bimsha will become dumb. Gammon-gata, it is a very little thing that I am asking."

All day long she let her kite go farther up into the sky than all the other kites. Overhead the wind sang in their strings like bees, or like the thin cry of very small children ; but Katipah's was so far away she could scarcely see it against the blue. " Gammon-gata ! " she cried, till the twilight drew sea and land together, and she was left alone.

Then she called down her kite sadly ; hand over hand she drew it by the cord till she saw it fluttering over her head like a great moth searching for a flower in the gloom. " Wahoo ! wahoo ! " she could hear the wind crying through its strings, like the wailing of a very small child.

It had become so dark that Katipah hardly knew what the kite had brought her till she touched the tiny warm limbs that lay cradled among the strings that netted the frames





to its cord. Full of wonder and delight, she lifted the windling out of its nest and laid it in her bosom. Then she slung the kite across her shoulder and ran home, laughing and crying for joy and triumph to think that all Bimsha's mockery must now be at an end.

So quite early the next morning Katipah sat herself down very demurely in the doorway, with her child hidden in the folds of her gown, and waited for Bimsha's evil eye to thrust itself over her happiness.

She had not long to wait. Bimsha came out of her door and, looking across to Katipah, cried: "Well, Katipah, and where is your fine husband to-day?"

"My husband is gone out," said Katipah; "but if you care to look, you can see my baby. It is ever so much more beautiful than yours."

Bimsha, when she heard that, turned green and yellow with envy; and there, plain to see, was Katipah holding up to view the most beautiful babe that ever gave the sunlight a good excuse for visiting this wicked earth. The mere sight of so much innocent beauty and happiness gave Bimsha a shock from which it took her three weeks to recover. After that she would sit at her window and for pure envy keep watch to see Katipah and the child playing together, the child which was so much more beautiful and well-behaved than her own.

As for Katipah, she was so happy now that the sorrow of waiting for her husband's return grew small. Day by day the West Wind blew softly, and she knew that Gammon-gata was there, keeping watch over her and the child.

Every day she would say to the little one: "Come, my plum-petal, my wind-flower, I will send thee up to thy father, that he may see how fat thou art getting and be proud of

thee!" And going down to the shore, she would lay the child among the strings of the kite and send it up to where Gammon-gata blew a wide breath over the sea. And as it went, she would hear the child crow with joy at being so uplifted from earth; and laughing to herself, she would think: "When he sees his child so patterned after his own heart, Gammon-gata will be too proud to remain long away from me."

When she drew the child back to her out of the sky, she covered it with caresses, crying: "Oh, my wind-blown one, my cloudlet, my sky-blossom, my little piece out of heaven, hast thou seen thy father, and has he told thee that he loves me?" And the child would crow with mysterious delight, being too young to tell anything it knew in words.

Bimsha out of her window watched and saw all this, not comprehending it; and in her evil heart a wish grew up that she might by some means put an end to all Katipah's happiness. So one day towards evening, when Katipah, alone upon the shore, had let her kite and her little one go up to the fleecy edges of a cloud through which the golden sunlight was streaming, Bimsha came softly behind, and with a sharp knife cut the string by which alone the kite was held from falling.

"Oh, silly Bimsha!" cried Katipah, "what have you done that for?"

Up in air the kite made a plunge forward, fluttered and stumbled in its course, and came shooting headlong to earth.

"Oh, dear!" cried Katipah, "if my



beautiful little kite gets torn, Bimsha, that will be your fault !”

When the kite fell, it lay unhurt on one of the soft sandhills that ringed the bay ; but no sign of the child was to be seen. Katipah was laughing when she picked up her kite and ran home. And Bimsha thought : “ Is it witchcraft, or did the child fall into the sea ? ”

In the night the West Wind came and tapped at Katipah's window ; and rising from her bed, she heard Gammon-gata's voice calling tenderly to her. When she opened the window to the blindness of the black night, he kissed her, and putting the little one in her arms, said : “ Wait only a little while longer, Katipah, and I will come again to you ! Already you are learning to be brave.”

In the morning Bimsha looked out, and there sat Katipah in her own doorway with the child safe and sound in her arms. And, plain to see, he had on a beautiful golden coat, and little silver wings were fastened to his feet, and his head was garnished with a wreath of flowers, the like of which were never seen on earth. He was like a child of noble birth and fortune, and the small motherly face of Katipah shone with pride and happiness as she nursed him.

“ Where did you steal those things ? ” asked Bimsha. “ And how did the child come back ? I thought he had fallen into the sea and been drowned.”

“ Ah ! ” cried Katipah slyly, “ he was up in the clouds when the kite left him, and he came down with the rain last night. It is nothing wonderful. You were foolish, Bimsha, if you thought that to fall into the clouds would do the child any harm. Up there you can have no idea how beautiful it is — such fields of gold, such wonderful gardens, such flowers and fruits ; it is from there that all the beauty and wealth of the world must come. See all that he has brought with him ! And it is all



your doing, because you cut the cord of the kite. Oh, clever Bimsha !”

As soon as Bimsha heard that, she ran and got a big kite, and fastening her own child into the strings, started it to fly.

“Do not think,” cried the envious woman, “that you are the only one whose child is to go clothed in gold ! My child is as good as yours any day ; wait and you shall see !”

So presently, when the kite was well up into the clouds, as Katipah's kite had been, she cut the cord, thinking surely that the same fortune would be for her as had been for Katipah. But instead of that, all at once the kite fell headlong to the earth, child and all ; and when she ran to pick him up, Bimsha found that her son's life had paid forfeit for her own enviousness and folly.

The wicked woman went green and purple with jealousy and rage ; and running to the chief magistrate, she told him that while she was flying a kite with her child fastened to its back, Katipah had come out and cut the string, so that by her doing the child was now dead.

When the chief magistrate heard that, he sent and caused Katipah to be thrown into prison, and told her that the next day she should certainly be put to death.

Katipah went meekly, carrying her little son in one hand and her blue-and-green kite in the other, for that had become so dear to her that she could not now part from it. And all the way to prison Bimsha followed, mocking and asking : “Tell us, Katipah, where is your fine husband now ?”

In the night the West Wind came and tapped at the prison window and called tenderly : “Katipah, Katipah, are you there ?” And when Katipah got up from her bed of straw and looked out, there was Gammon-gata once more.

He reached his hands through the bars and put them round her face. “Katipah,” he said, “you have become brave ; you are now fit to be the wife of the West Wind. To-morrow you shall travel with me all over the world ; you shall not stay in one land any more. Now give me our son ; for a little while I must take him from you. To prove your courage, you must find your own way out of this trouble which you have got into through making a fool of Bimsha.”

So Katipah gave him the child through the bars of the prison window, and when he was gone, lay down and slept till it became light.

In the morning the chief magistrate and Bimsha, together with the whole populace, came to Katipah's cell to see her led out to death. And when it was found that her child had disappeared, “She is a witch !” they cried. “She has eaten it !” And the chief magistrate said that, being a witch, instead of hanging, she was to be burned.



"I have not eaten my child, and I am no witch!" said Katipah, as, taking with her her blue-and-green kite, she trotted out to the place of execution. When she was come to the appointed spot, she said to the chief magistrate: "To every criminal it is permitted to plead in defence of himself; but because I am innocent, am I not also allowed to plead?"

The chief magistrate told her she might speak if she had anything to say.

"All I ask," said Katipah, "is that I may be allowed once more to fly my blue-and-green kite as I used to do in the days when I was happy, and I will show you soon that I am not guilty of what is laid to my charge. It is a very little thing that I ask!"

So the chief magistrate gave her leave; and there before all the people she sent up her kite till it flew high over the roofs of the town. Softly the West Wind took it and blew it away towards the sea. "Oh, Gammon-gata," she whispered gently, "hear me now, for I am not afraid."

The Wind blew hard upon the kite, and pulled as though to catch it away, so Katipah twisted the cord once or twice round her waist that she might keep the safer hold over it. Then she said to the chief magistrate and to all the people that were assembled: "I am innocent of all that is charged against me. For, first, it was that wicked Bimsha herself that killed her own child."

"Prove it!" cried the chief magistrate.

"I cannot," replied Katipah.

"Then you must die," said the chief magistrate.

"In the second place," went on Katipah, "I did not eat my own child."

"Prove it!" cried the chief magistrate again.

"I will," said Katipah. "Oh, Gammon-gata! it is a very little thing that I ask."

Down the string of the kite, first a mere speck against the sky, then larger, till plain for all to see, came the missing one, slithering and sliding, with his golden coat, and the little silver wings tied to his ankles, and handfuls of flowers which he threw into his mother's face as he came.

"Oh, cruel chief magistrate!" cried Katipah, receiving the babe in her arms, "does it seem that I have eaten him?"

"You are a witch," said the chief magistrate, "or how do you come to have a child

that disappears and comes again from nowhere? It is not possible to permit such things to be; you and your child shall both be burned together."

Katipah drew softly upon the kite-string. "Oh, Gammon-gata!" she cried, "lift me up now very high, and I will not be afraid!"

Then suddenly before all eyes Katipah was lifted up by the cord of the kite which she had wound about her waist; right up from the earth she was lifted, till her feet rested above the heads of the people.

Katipah, with her babe in her arms, swung softly through the air, out of reach of the hands stretched up to catch her, and addressed the populace in these words—

"Oh, cruel people, who will not believe innocence when it speaks, you must believe me now! I am the wife of the West Wind, of Gammon-gata, the beautiful, the bearer of fine weather, who also brings back the wings that fly, till the winter be over. Is it well, do you think, to be at war with the West Wind?"

"Ah, foolish ones! I go now, for Gammon-gata calls me, and I am no longer afraid. I go to travel in many lands whither he carries me, and it will be long before I return here. Many dark days are coming to you, and you shall not feel the West Wind, the bearer of fine weather, blowing over you from land to sea; nor shall you see the blossoms open white over the hills, nor feel the earth grow warm as the summer comes in, because the bringer of fair weather is angry with you for the foolishness which you have done. But when at last the West Wind returns to you, remember that Katipah, the poor and unprofitable one, is Gammon-gata's wife, and that she has remembered and has prayed for you."

And so saying, Katipah threw open her arms and let go the cord of the kite which held her safe.

"Oh, Gammon-gata!" she cried, "I do not see your eyes, but I am not afraid."

And at that, even while she seemed upon the point of falling to destruction, there flashed into sight a fair youth, with dark hair and garments full of a storm of flying petals, who, catching up Katipah and her child in his arms, laughed scorn to those below, and soaring over the roofs of the town, vanished away seaward.